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THE HISTORY OF TOM RIGBY.

In THREE VOLUMES.

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THE HISTORY OF TOM RIGBY.

BOOK X.

THESE little gallantries were not diſpleaſing to Lydia, and Rigby received a degree of happineſs from being allowed to exerciſe them. The touch thrilled to his heart, which was melted with the tendereſt, the ſofteſt ſenſations. — "Charming Miſs Bennet," ſaid he, as he was walking alone with her one day, her fair arm entwined in his, "how "happy am I to ſee you ſo much recovered,

" and ſo well able to bleſs me with your " company."

" Yes, thank God," replied ſhe with a ſigh, " I am much better than I have " been."

" But," ſaid he, " I am afraid you are " not ſo well as you were: I ſee a gloom " in your countenance; you are oppreſſed " with melancholy; I obſerve frequent " ſighs heave your boſom; I dread a re- " turn of your illneſs, which had nearly " been ſo fatal to you. Forgive my thus " intereſting myſelf in your affairs, but " aſſure yourſelf that nothing is more dear " to me than your welfare."

" I have no reaſon to doubt it, Mr. " Rigby; your behaviour has convinced " me that you are my friend, and I am " ſure I want one."

" Small is my power, and trifling are " the ſervices that I can render to you; " but, ſuch as they are, make me happy " by commanding them; depending on

" this,

"this, that my heart is totally devoted to "you, and that it is too honeſt and ſincere "to make any profeſſions that it means "not to perform and adhere to."

He ſtopped. Lydia hung down her head, and remained ſilent. — "You doubt me "then, Lydia, and I am wretched. If "you diſbelieve my aſſurances of friend-"ſhip, in what manner would you have "treated me, had I been hardy enough to "have revealed the favourite paſſion of "my heart. I am yet maſter of that ſe-"cret, and it ſhall die with me; for "ſure, of all the torments that can afflict "the human breaſt, thoſe ariſing from "ſlighted love are the moſt fierce and "poignant."

This was touching the tendereſt ſtring in Lydia's whole compoſition. This was a ſubject that was neareſt her heart. It was a converſation ſhe had long wiſhed in ſecret to be engaged in with Rigby; yet, ſo violent were her agitations at his men-

tioning his paſſion, that ſhe could ſcarcely ſtand. Her arm trembled ſo that he could not avoid perceiving it. What to attribute her emotions to he knew not; but he found ſhe was much affected. Some trees that had been lately felled lay near the road ſide; to theſe he conducted her in ſilence, for he thought ſhe wanted to ſit down. She ſeated herſelf, and he placed himſelf cloſe to her. Rigby was in a ſtate of torment at that moment, which would have induced his amiable miſtreſs to have pitied him, had ſhe not been otherwiſe well inclined to it. Rapid was the ſucceſſion of diſagreeable ideas in his brain. Till that moment in which he dreaded her anſwer, he never knew how much he loved her. The virtues of the charming maid, united with great perſonal beauty; her ſituation, which encreaſed her delicacy and tenderneſs, awakened the humanity of her lover, and had got a much firmer footing in his heart than he was aware of.

His

His fears leſt he had offended her, when he ſaw her thus affected, were augmented, and he knew not what to do — "I am mi-"ſerable, Miſs Bennet," ſaid he: "whether "your preſent uneaſineſs ariſes from ill-"neſs, or, which I dread more, from your "anger at my raſhneſs, in either ſituation "I am wretched. Great though my of-"fence has been, yet I will rely on your "goodneſs for pardon; and let me be ſo "happy as to obtain it, on promiſing ne-"ver to tranſgreſs in like manner again."

He pauſed—Still ſhe found herſelf unable to ſpeak. A variety of conflicting paſſions tied up her tongue. Her joy at hearing theſe ſounds from the lips of the man ſhe had formerly ſighed for, rendered her incapable of ſpeaking. Her mantling blood roſe in her cheeks, her palpitating heart throbbed in her agitated boſom; but ſhe could not ſpeak. — "In what manner, "Miſs Bennet, am I to conſtrue this ſi-"lence? But while it permits me to ac-

"quaint you with my love, I will bleſs "it. Yes, adorable Lydia, I love; my "paſſion is rooted ſo deeply in my heart, "the one muſt be torn away before the "other is eradicated. I have now informed "you of my preſumptuous hopes; I trem- "ble at the repulſe they deſerve, and, I "fear, will meet with, from you. The "wretched mariner views not the ſky, "black with impending tempeſts, with "more horror than I do your brow, ex- "pecting every inſtant my merited fate. "Dreadful ſtate! when you will neither "permit me to be your friend nor your "lover."

The melancholy tone in which he uttered theſe words penetrated to her heart.— "I aſſure you, Mr. Rigby, I ſhall eſteem "myſelf honoured in your friendſhip."

"And to that alone I will confine my- "ſelf. At humble diſtance will I remain, "and pray for that ſucceſs and happineſs "to attend your life, which I ſo ſincerely

"wiſh

"wiſh you. Your friend, your aſſured "friend, I will remain; and ſhall deem it "the honour and happineſs of my life to "be allowed that title. But though I "have dared to cheriſh tenderer paſſions "for you, permit me to affirm to you, in "the moſt ſolemn manner, that it is not "your fortune, or rank in life, ſo much "ſuperior to mine, that has ever influenced "me. My heart is ſuperior to all ſuch "conſiderations. I loved you, abſtracted "from every lucrative view. You have "preſcribed bounds to my hopes, and I "will endeavour to confine myſelf within "them. I will check my deſires, I will "reſtrain my paſſions, but I cannot for-"get; and, whilſt remembrance lives, I "muſt be wretched."

"I never entertained an opinion of you "that took away from your merit, Mr. "Rigby; I ever thought you worthy of "my greateſt eſteem."

"I confeſs myſelf highly honoured by "your approbation of me; yet, do not "you act cruelly by me? I am yet in "ſuſpenſe; a ſtate more dreadful than "the moſt melancholy certainty. Why "do you, with a miſplaced humanity, de-"lay giving me the anſwer that will put "an end to my hopes? Or will you per-"mit me to cheriſh them? At one mo-"ment my anxious heart ſwells with rap-"ture, at another it is depreſſed with "grief. Eaſe it, I beſeech you. Tell me, "lovely Lydia, tell me, is it poſſible for "you to caſt an eye of favour on one ſo "much beneath you? Am I not deſpi-"cable and wretched?"

"You judge too hardly of yourſelf, "Sir; merit levels diſtinctions, and re-"gard is ignorant of them. What will "you have me ſay to quiet your tumults? "I want that eaſe to mine. I will acquaint "you with my ſentiments; reſerve will be "injurious, and but lower me in the opi-

"nion

"nion of a man of honour. Such I "eſteem you, Mr. Rigby; and I will be "ingenuous enough to aſſure you, a mat- "ter I believe that your penetration made "you acquainted with long ago, that your "profeſſions of eſteem for me are very "agreeable."

"No," ſaid he, interrupting her, "I "am not vain enough for that. Though, "through your complacence, I have en- "joyed the honour of an intimacy with "you, yet never did I imagine what I "wiſhed to be true. But allow me to "aſſure you of my unalterable, my invio- "lable affection; and receive the tribute "of an heart that is unalienably yours."

As he ſpoke he fell on his knees before her, and ſeizing her tremulous hand, preſſed it to his fervid lips. — "Riſe, Mr. Rigby," ſaid ſhe; "ſuch humiliation becomes not "the perſon whom I have made this decla- "tion to; riſe, I pray you. This may "beſpeak your regard for me, and my

" vanity may be flattered by it, but I can-
" not allow it in the man I have thus di-
" ſtinguiſhed."

" Let me ever be thus happy, thus
" bleſſed, by ſuch a favourable diſtinction.
" Let a ſeries of actions, worthy your re-
" gard, more properly, more effectually
" ſpeak for me. In this manner only do
" I wiſh to make my love known."

" And in that manner I wiſh to receive
" it."

Lydia grew more confident from the aſ-ſurances of her lover's virtuous paſſion; aſ-ſurances which ſhe longed to hear, and was infinitely pleaſed to know. She was ready to believe them; but in what manner to inform him of her ſentiments ſhe knew not. Too great a forwardneſs would have diſguſted him as much as too great a re-ſerve might unhappily have repreſſed his flame, and ſmothered, though not extin-guiſhed, it. She ſaw her delicate paſſion reflected in him; and ſeeing, rejoiced in

it.

it. But could ſhe at once indulge the poſſeſſion of her heart? Could ſhe tell him that her life, her happineſs, ſolely depended on him? It was impoſſible, and it would have been imprudent, to have done it at once. Her future behaviour would ſufficiently convince him of her regard. Hers was a nice part to play, with the tendereſt paſſions oppoſing her modeſty and reſerve. Her prudence and diſcretion triumphed over love. She gave him room to hope every thing; and reſtraining her own fondneſs, alſo kept his tranſports within due bounds.

She was now ſufficiently recovered to be able to proceed on their walk, and they turned homewards. This diſcovery made them both happy. Rigby could talk of his paſſion to his charming Lydia without reſtraint, and ſhe could liſten to his vows without fear. Many interviews ſucceeded to this, before ſhe informed him of her affection for him; and he attained that

knowledge imperceptibly, and by ſlow degrees. As the ſun with regular and gradual ſteps climbs the vaſt expanſe of heaven, diſpelling the fogs and miſts that obſcure his rays, till he obtains meridian brightneſs; ſo did the gentle Lydia drive away thoſe doubts and fears from Rigby's heart, till the bright noon of virtuous love ſhone on the enraptured couple. Happy were your hours then, children of innocence; bliſsful were your moments, ſacred to virtue and to love. Content and peace walked hand in hand with you; the roſes of delight were ſpread in your paths, and the thorns of guilt were not to be found amongſt them.

Mrs. Wilcox perceived the footing on which our lovers now were. Female modeſty prevented Lydia from telling her couſin of her ſituation, who took an opportunity of being even with her for ſuch unneceſſary reſerve; and commending her choice of Rigby while he was preſent, wiſhed

wiſhed them every happineſs together that mutual love could give them. Lydia's face was overſpread with bluſhes, and her eyes ſeemed to reproach her for unkindneſs, in thus talking of what was nevertheleſs no ſecret. Bleſſed in each other, the enamoured pair ſought for no foreign pleaſure, when they found every thing in their own breaſts that could contribute to their happineſs.

While they ſpent their hours in joy, grief and affliction preyed on the hapleſs Hannah Wilkins. The paſſion which her ſhame prevented indulging in the life-time of the man ſhe adored, now was let looſe. She nouriſhed the fatal, the hopeleſs flame: and ſhe revered Hillaſton's memory with as much devotion as the moſt zealous bigot worſhips the relicks of ſome legendary ſaint. Her whole ſoul was engroſſed with his beloved idea. On the good qualities of his heart ſhe grounded her love; his virtues were always uppermoſt in her thoughts;

thoughts; on them her mind ran by day, and his image returned to her dreams at night.—"I am very unhappy, and I can-"not relieve myſelf." Thus would ſhe complain in ſecret. "I perceive my folly, "and I know the fruitleſſneſs of my tears; "but I cannot ſufficiently lament the loſs "of a man who was ſo dear to me. I will "imitate his virtues, I will follow his ex-"ample. The leſſons his friendſhip taught "me I have treaſured up in my memory, "and never ſhall they be forgotten by me. "Happy ſhould I have been if he had lived; "and if he had, it is not on me he would "have placed his affections. In every way "I ſhould have been miſerable."

Unavailing as her lamentations were, yet they were not huſhed; and though her tears flowed in vain, yet were they not dried up. Her father and mother perceived the great change in their daughter, and were totally at a loſs to account for it. Her colour was gone, her ſprightlineſs vaniſhed,

vaniſhed, and melancholy and dejection aſſumed its place. Frequent enquiries did they make concerning her health: and ever did ſhe anſwer them by ſaying, Nothing ailed her. They grieved at her obſtinate ſilence, which would not allow her to point out to them the means of cure. Rigby noticed the change in her, and was very ſorry for it; and was, in reality, as much at a loſs to account for the cauſe of it, as the reſt of the family. However, he imagined he could give a better gueſs at it than they could, who were not witneſſes to the emotions ſhe diſcovered at the account of Hillaſton's death. He thought, by finding this matter out, it might be poſſible to remove the ground of Hannah's uneaſineſs, whom, having been bred up with, he regarded as a ſiſter. He reſolved to try to unravel this myſtery. —"You are melancholy, Hannah," ſaid he to her one afternoon, "come and take "a walk with me."

She

She conſented, and he led her unſuſpecting towards the wood where Hillaſton had rendered her ſuch ſignal ſervice. With agreeable chat he beguiled the way, and before ſhe could recollect herſelf, ſhe found that ſhe was at the memorable ſpot. Every tender paſſion was encreaſed in Hannah's breaſt. Rigby ſtopped, and looking wiſtfully at her, aſked, "Is not this the place "where my poor friend armed himſelf in "defence of virtue and honour, againſt "villainy and force?"

"It is," replied the trembling Hannah, with a faultering voice.

"Poor Hillaſton! thou wert truly wor-"thy. I think I ſee thee now."

"Where, for heaven's ſake!" exclaimed the terrified maid. "I ſhall die with fear."

"Fear not, my dear Hannah; I only "meant his virtues were ever preſent to "me, and my fancy repreſents his image "as when alive. Was he not a worthy "man, Hannah?"

"Indeed

"Indeed he was," replied ſhe, with a ſigh, the ſilent tear trickling down her pallid cheek.

"I aſſure you, Hannah, I lament him "very much; and highly as I thought of "him before, his generoſity to you en-"creaſed my good opinion of him."

"I ſhall never forget his goodneſs, Mr. "Rigby."

She ſobbed as ſhe ſpoke, her voice was hardly articulate. He looked attentively at her: ſhe bluſhed, and turned from him.—"Your good-nature, Hannah, is "truly commendable; but tell me, my "dear girl, is it only for a friend you "grieve in this manner? Hillaſton de-"ſerved your regard, and I cannot blame "your affliction."

"By what means," ſaid ſhe, "have you "thus learned what I was moſt anxious to "hide from the world? Tell me, Mr. "Rigby, have I ſaid or done any thing "that would lead to a diſcovery of my ſen-"timents?

"timents? I ſhall die with ſhame, if I "have, and never more be able to ſhew "my face."

"No, indeed, you never did: but I "have long ſuſpected this to be the cauſe "of your unhappineſs. I am your ſincere "friend, Hannah. My heart is ſuſcep- "tible of pity: inform me of your griefs, "and receive every conſolation in my "power to give you."

"I will impart every thing to you: I "know you are good, very good, and "will pity me. There is nothing I ſhould "be aſhamed of, for I have not been "guilty; yet it is mortifying to expoſe my "weakneſs. But the object of my wiſhes "is numbered with the dead, and in the "grave: my tears and lamentations ſhall "not reach him. I did love your friend, "Mr. Rigby, but he knew not of it. I "adore his memory now. My gratitude "firſt taught me to eſteem him, and "my heart was brought to love him in-

"ſenſibly;

" ſenſibly: yet never did he ſpeak to me
" any thing but the language of friend-
" ſhip. From his regard to my welfare he
" gave me the beſt advice for the regula-
" tion of my conduct. When he ſpoke to
" me, he laid aſide that fierce look and
" ſtern voice which he generally had, and
" conveyed his inſtructions to me with the
" greateſt gentleneſs, and the moſt winning
" mildneſs. At thoſe moments I ſaw into
" his heart: and is it a wonder if the
" beauty of it charmed me? Such noble
" ſentiments I never heard before. His
" conduct ſhewed that he was actuated by
" them. Nothing flattering or ſeducing
" ever came out of his mouth; and, with-
" out deſigning it, he won my heart. How
" amiable muſt he have been, had it pleaſed
" God to have reſtored him to his ſenſes.
" But he is gone, and I may tell to you
" the paſſion I entertained for him. It is
" truly virtuous. His honour and good-
" neſs charmed me! Blame me not for

" lamenting

"lamenting him. I know the folly of it,
"but I cannot help it. This I requeſt,
"as I have confided in you, do not betray
"my weakneſs to my father and mother.
"I would not wiſh to add to their grief,
"by giving them an opportunity to ima-
"gine that I had acted amiſs. It is not
"every heart can feel the delicacy of my
"unhappy ſentiments."

"Be aſſured it ſhall remain an entire ſe-
"cret with me: but reflect, Hannah, how
"fruitleſs is your grief! how unavailing
"your tears!—Conſider—"

"I do," ſaid ſhe, weeping as ſhe ſpoke;
"but this place revives the ſenſe of the
"obligation I am under to him. In this
"ſpot I ſat, almoſt overpowered, the vic-
"tim of brutal force, when, like an angel
"of light, he came to my deliverance, and
"reſcued me. So good, ſo honeſt a man,
"I ſhall never know again."

Rigby ſeeing her much affected, led her homewards, and in the way ſaid every thing

that.

that reaſon or humanity could ſuggeſt, to combat the fatal paſſion which ſhe conceived. She admitted that he was right, and promiſed to get rid of her melancholy if ſhe could. He had the pleaſure to find ſhe appeared a little more compoſed, and began to conceive that time might effect her cure. This converſation, and the remembrance of his friend, which was ſtrongly revived by it, threw an air of dejection into his countenance. His melancholy was viſible when he entered Mrs. Wilcox's houſe, and it did not eſcape Miſs Bennet's obſervation. Her tendereſt aſſiduities were not wanting to remove it. They were left alone: and Miſs Bennet aſked him if he was well, or what had cauſed that alteration in him? He replied, "The thoughts "of an old friend, whom he had unhap-"pily loſt."

"It is grievous to part with our friends," ſaid ſhe. "No one has felt the loſs more "ſeverely than I have done. But Mr.

"Rigby,

"Rigby, if I can recollect, when you "firſt came down here, though I was "then very ill myſelf, and knew not how "long I ſhould live, I thought that I per-"ceived a gloom very unuſual hung over "you, and ſomething ſeemed to prey upon "your ſpirits. It is now happily removed. "May I know the cauſe of it? Pardon a "woman's curioſity; and, if it ought not "to be revealed, I will check my deſire to "hear it."

"There is nothing relating to myſelf, "adorable Lydia, that I will not moſt "willingly inform you of. Your ſuppo-"ſitions are true: I was then wretched "beyond deſcription. Deſpair and grief "had taken poſſeſſion of me, and your "charms only were ſufficiently powerful "to baniſh them from my ſoul. I will "tell you the cauſe of my woe. It is al-"moſt forgotten in your preſence, and it "revives my affliction to recollect it."

"Then,"

"Then," ſaid ſhe, interrupting him, "forbear to tell it; I would not wiſh to "give you uneaſineſs, and eſpecially to "gratify an idle curioſity."

"No," ſaid he, "permit me to relate it "to you; I am ſure your humanity will be "intereſted in my ſtory, and your good-"nature will pity me. Beſides, it is abſo-"lutely incumbent on me to let you into "the hiſtory of my life, that I may not "deceive you; for I am by no means the "ſon of the perſon whom you have heard "to be my mother."

"No!" ſaid the aſtoniſhed Lydia, her curioſity greatly excited by ſo myſterious a beginning, "Whoſe then? I ſhall be greatly "obliged to you to clear up this matter "to me."

He began, in obedience to her deſire, and went through the narration of his hiſtory, concealing the preſent name of his mother and her family, and entirely ſuppreſſing Hillaſton's ſtory. His fair auditor liſtened

liſtened with the greateſt attention; nor was her gentle boſom unaffected at the different parts of it. She could not refrain from tears at the deſcription of his unhappy mother's meeting him ſo ſuddenly, and on ſuch an occaſion. He concluded his relation by telling her, that he had informed her of every circumſtance of his life, that ſhe could be at all concerned in the knowledge of. — "And now, Madam, though "honoured with your good opinion, I muſt "own that I am unworthy of you in every "ſhape, except poſſeſſing an heart inſpired "with the moſt pure and ardent paſſion that "ever filled the breaſt of man; and that is "no merit in me, becauſe I cannot help "myſelf."

"Talk not in that manner, Mr. Rigby; "it calls my judgment in queſtion; and "it ſhall be my pride and happineſs to "remove every difference that fortune or "chance may have placed between us; "henceforth think no more of it."

"Un-

"unparalleled goodneſs!" ſaid he, taking her by the hand. "In what manner ſhall I "thank you for this profeſſion of kind-"neſs! My life will be too ſhort to ſhew "my gratitude. Words are incapable of "expreſſing my ſenſe of your condeſcen-"ſion. Then ſhorten the term of my pro-"bation, and let us be united in thoſe "ſacred bands, diſſoluble only by death."

As he ſpoke, he approached her lips, and claimed a willing kiſs from them.

"You ſeem to have made ſure of your "pardon," ſaid ſhe, ſmiling, "before you "committed the offence. But do not you "think you are hurrying matters forward "a little too faſt?"

"Can you blame me for being impa-"tient to poſſeſs all that can make me "happy, that can make me forget my "paſt misfortunes, in you?"

"You may not receive much blame "from me, perhaps; but there are ſome "impediments in the way, that may be

"equally diſagreeable to us both. I can-
"not marry till I am one-and-twenty: it
"is true, I want but a few months of at-
"taining that age; till then I am under
"Mr. Wilcox's care, by whom I am very
"ſure I ſhall be reſtrained from marrying,
"and more eſpecially you. My poor fa-
"ther was ſo much impoſed on by his
"pretended forbearance, and his good
"behaviour, that he made him executor;
"and, for what cauſe I know not, thus
"reſtricted me in the diſpoſal of myſelf
"where my heart would willingly confer
"my hand. I am now convinced that his
"moderation was all hypocriſy, and that
"he has a bad and villainous heart."

"Aye!" ſaid Rigby, "you ſurprize me.
"What inſtances have you known of
"this?"

"Several I can gueſs at, but I ſhall not
"mention any till I am certain of them.
"One however is, that he has taken away
"a woman whom a gentleman in this
"neighbour-

" neighbourhood kept, and has her in " London. I ſuppoſe his frequent viſits " there are on her account, though he " pretends to his wife that they are occa- " ſioned by my buſineſs. I cannot think " of cauſing my poor couſin the vexation " that this knowledge of his infidelity " would give her; it therefore remains a " ſecret with me. Another thing: I am " greatly miſtaken if he has not impaired " his fortune very much; and, if ſo, I " am ſure he will make free with mine. " That he is welcome to do: but, I do not " know how it is, I have ſome fears about " me that I cannot get rid of.—If I was to " die, he would inherit the eſtate; my " marrying would cut off all his hopes; " therefore I have every thing to fear from " him."

"He dares not injure you," replied Rigby, his reſentment alarmed at the thought; "he " dares not. There is no crime he can com- " mit againſt me that I will not pardon: but

" that!—By heaven! he had better take a " lion by the beard. There ſhould be no " place ſacred enough to protect him from " my rage; and, though he ſhould fly to " earth's extremeſt verge, I will purſue " him with unceaſing vengeance."

" Have patience. There is nothing done " yet. I am ſure he has no regard for " you. He remembers what you did for- " merly, and bears you no good-will for it. " I am apprehenſive—I am ſuſpicious— " Perhaps there may be no good grounds " for my being ſo. This reflection has " produced that melancholy in me lately, " which you have been ſo kindly endea- " vouring to diſſipate. I cannot commu- " nicate theſe notions to Mrs. Wilcox; as " her huſband, whom ſhe tenderly loves, " is the object of my ſuſpicions. You are " the only friend I can truſt, in whom I " confide: the only perſon whom I wiſh to " acquaint with it."

A bluſh

A bluſh interrupted her ſpeech.—"Thus "let me be ever favoured," ſaid Rigby, claſping her to his enraptured boſom; "and, "when I forfeit your good opinion of me, "may that hour be my laſt. Lydia, "lovely Lydia! baniſh your apprehen- "ſions, and diſmiſs your fears. Your vir- "tue is the care of heaven, which delights "in its own likeneſs. Permit me then to "attend you with aſſiduous care, to watch "your ſteps, to hover round you like your "guardian genius, and ward off all danger "from her I love. This ſhall be my taſk, "till the hour, replete with ineffable joy, "ſhall arrive, in which I ſhall receive the "hand that is to bleſs me for my future "life. I care not for your couſin's hatred, "nor do I fear his reſentment, only as it "may affect you. Thou art too dear to "me, my beloved Lydia! to forſake or "neglect your welfare. What I am able "to do ſhall be done, as well to guard you "from harm, as to prevent it."

Lydia thanked him for his care, aſſured him that ſhe believed his profeſſions of love, and convinced him that they were not diſregarded. He had every reaſon to believe that her affection for him was mutual. Had he known the truth, he might have found it ſuperior, and attended with thoſe inexpreſſible tenderneſſes which the ſofter ſex neceſſarily feel under the influence of the gentleſt of paſſions. Rigby found himſelf beloved. He was allowed every familiarity and intimacy that virtue could demand, or modeſty grant. But though abſolutely poſſeſſed of her heart, he treated her, upon every occaſion, with the greateſt delicacy. The moſt refined notions of honour ruled his breaſt, and his reſpectful, yet affectionate behaviour, encreaſed the lovely Lydia's paſſion for her amiable admirer.

Wilcox's abſence was moſt favourable to the lovers, who enjoyed themſelves then; for Rigby did not chuſe to viſit at his houſe

houſe while he was in the country—He did not trouble them much; his ſtay was always ſhort when he did come, and that was very ſeldom. He was obliged to ſave appearances, even to his wife, who was then very big with child. She was as much alarmed at his continually reſiding in London, as Miſs Bennet was, but ſhe never hinted at the trouble it gave her. Her patience was as remarkable as her prudence; and ſhe ſeemed to make herſelf happy in the approaching union of the young couple, who both truely regarded her.

BOOK XI.

THUS time paſſed away: whilſt Lydia and Rigby were mutually impatient the arrival of that hour, which ſhould ſet them at liberty; but he knew not what he was to go through, before that could happen.

He was walking alone, near the houſe one day, when a countryman accoſted him, and aſked, "if he was not the gentle-"man that lived at farmer Wilkins's?"

He replied, "he lived there."

"Aye, I thought ſo," ſaid he.

"And your name is Ri-Ri-Rigby, or "Riſby."

"Yes, it is: What have you to ſay "to me?"

"Why, I have a letter for you, that is "all."

"Let me ſee it."

After ſome ſmall ſearch, firſt in one pocket, and then in another, he produced it. Rigby took it out of his hand, and looking attentively on the ſuperſcription, turned pale: his hands trembled, he viewed the ſeal; he dropped the unopened billet on the earth, and gazing at it wildly for ſome moments, exclaimed, with uplifted eyes, "Gracious God, ſupport "me! Where could this come from?"

The

The peaſant, who was aſtoniſhed at his emotions, replied, " That he had it from " a man, who was in the little houſe at the " bottom of the hill there, who ſaid he " would wait till he went back again."

Rigby paid but little attention to him. " Sure," ſaid he, as he ſtooped to take the letter up, " my eyes cannot have deceiv- " ed me, my ſenſes cannot err ſo widely; " and if it is as I ſuppoſe, ſomething mi- " raculous muſt have cauſed it" With eager haſte he broke it open, and, to his ſurprize, read theſe words:

" Be not aſtoniſhed, my dear Rigby, thy " friend yet lives; lives to acknowledge the " mercies of his God, and to be happy in " thy friendſhip. How this came to paſs, " I long to communicate to thy faithful " ear. I am anxious to ſee thee, to preſs " thee to my heart: but ere I could ven- " ture to appear before you, I ſent this to " inform you of my exiſtence, that I might

" not ſurprize you too much. Delay not " to ſee me, but haſten to the arms of thy " reſtored friend."

RICHARD HILLASTON.

" It is true, he yet lives! Reſtored in- " deed."

" Where got you this letter?"

" From a man at the houſe at the bottom " of the Hill."

" Then fly to him," ſaid he, " and tell " him I wait here for him with the utmoſt " impatience; delay not on your peril."

This extraordinary behaviour, which the ruſtic could not comprehend, made him imagine the gentleman was mad. He did not ſtay to be twice bidden, but ſet off as faſt as his legs could carry him. So great was Rigby's ſurprize, and ſo violent his emotions, that he could not believe this matter to be real: he read the letter ſeveral times over; he knew the writing to be that of his friend; but ſo myſterious was this whole tranſaction, that he could not tell what

what to think of it, or how to reconcile himſelf to it. He ſtood almoſt on the very ſame ſpot where the letter was delivered to him, with folded hands; his looks bent on the ground, in the poſture of Contemplation: he was really loſt in thought. At laſt, lifting up his eyes, he beheld his friend coming towards him, with the countryman who pointed out the ſpot where he ſtood, and then left him. Rigby dared not truſt his ſight; he concluded that his ſenſes had deceived him: his legs were riveted to the earth; amazement chained his tongue, and deprived him of all his powers. He ſtared wildly at his friend, were ſtill approached him. His cheeks were fluſhed with joy, to ſee Rigby again; his eye was ſuffuſed with the tear of pleaſure, the big drop trembled as it fell. "It is he, it is "my friend! my long-loſt, much-la-"mented friend," ſaid Rigby, as he flew to him, and caught him in his arms. Hillaſton received, and returned the em-

brace with tranſport. It was ſome time before either could ſpeak. "Oh, Hil-
"laſton," ſaid Rigby, "what trouble has
"the ſuppoſition of your death cauſed me.
"How many tears have I ſhed, in company
"with your worthy mother and ſiſter, up-
"on your account. But you are much al-
"tered in your appearance: your face no
"longer wears that gloom, which former-
"ly overſhadowed it; your eyes have loſt
"their ferocity, they are now placid and
"gentle; but your face is pale, and you
"appear greatly emaciated. Explain this
"myſtery to me. Surely, ſurely, you
"could not write that terrible letter,
"which has occaſioned me ſo much grief,
"without ſome ſuch dreadful determina-
"tion in your ſoul. I have ten thouſand
"queſtions to aſk you."

"I know it, Rigby, and in every one
"of them will I ſatisfy you, if your affec-
"tionate impatience does not prevent me.
"I am truly ſorry for the trouble I gave
you,

"you, by that account of my reſolution
"to deſtroy myſelf. I cannot think of it
"now, without horror; though I am
"greatly flattered, by the regard you have
"ſhewn for me. The alteration you ob-
"ſerve in me, is occaſioned by a change
"in my heart; I am no longer the victim
"of a criminal and unnatural paſſion; it
"appears to me as a dream, which paſſeth
"away, and is no more remembered. There
"is not a greater difference in my perſon,
"than in my mind; how that change was
"effected, I will now inform you.

"I left you, my friend, I remember,
"happy in the acknowledgement of the
"mutual paſſion which you and the
"charming Maria burned with."

"Ah, Hillaſton, that has been the
"ſource of much woe unto me; how,
"you ſhall know hereafter; proceed, and
"fear no more interruptions from me."

"The proſpect of your happineſs with
"that amiable girl, gave me the greateſt

"pleaſure

" pleaſure upon your account, but encreaſ-
" ed my private miſery.

" Every one can be happy, but me," ſaid I to myſelf; " impiouſly reproaching " Heaven for the depravity of my own " heart. The pleaſures of ſocial life, of " domeſtic joys, of nuptial bliſs, are denied " only to me; I ought not to live in that " ſociety, of which I cannot be called a " member, when the felicity of others " creates my unhappineſs. I will relinquiſh " it then—No other world can be ſo pro- " ductive of woe to me, as this has been. " What enjoyment have I here? My life " is a perpetual conflict of reaſon and na- " ture, againſt the moſt ſhocking and hor- " rid paſſion. Be it mine to put an end " to it.

" Theſe were my reflections——But " I had entertained ſome doubts, when an " incident determined me. I had attained " the entrance of a pleaſant village, about " the evening, on a little green, through

" which

" which my path led, where ſome children
" were playing. Cloſe to it, on one ſide, was
" a neat though ſmall houſe: my eye curſo-
" rily ſurveyed theſe objects, without paying
" any attention to them; for my mind was
" entirely ingroſſed by the conſideration of
" my own miſeries, and I purſued my
" walk, till I reached the ſpot where the
" children were. At that inſtant, a mad
" dog, purſued by a number of people,
" ruſhed furiouſly out of a lane that op-
" ened on the green, and then towards the
" groupe of happy infants, who were
" ſporting in peace and fancied ſafety.
" The noiſe the people made alarmed
" them, and ſtopped me; they ſoon per-
" ceived their danger, and inſtantly diſ-
" perſed different ways. One beautiful
" boy, about ſix years old, towards whom
" the frantic animal was running, flew to
" me for protection, pale with fear. He
" had ſcarcely got hold of my coat, when
" the dog, who was making directly to me,

" came

" came within reach of my arm: I ſtruck
" at, and providentially killed him: his
" brains flew all about, and he fell lifeleſs
" at my feet. The people gathered about
" him, from his ſize and fury, the object
" of their terror, and eyed him at a diſ-
" tance with ſilent apprehenſion, yet du-
" bious of their ſecurity. The little boy
" ſtill kept hold of my coat, and remained
" ſtruck dumb with fear. At that inſtant,
" a ſhrill cry was heard, 'Where is my
'child! Where is my child?' The croud
" opened the circle, to give paſſage to a
" lady genteelly dreſſed, poſſeſſed of an
" agreeable perſon, and an handſome face,
" but at that moment, was the picture of
" horror; her eyes ſtaring wildly, her
" hair diſcompoſed: almoſt breathleſs and
" pallid, did ſhe run or rather fly to the
" ſpot where we then ſtood. As ſoon as
" ſhe had caſt her eyes on the boy, be-
" ſmeared with the bloody brains of the
" ſlaughtered beaſt, ſhe fainted away.

" The

" The child ran to her. Happily, ſhe was
" ſupported by ſome of the byſtanders.
" Her huſband arrived, he ſoon recovered
" her. ' Where is my boy?' was the firſt
" queſtion ſhe aſked. ' Here I am, Mam-
' ma.' ' And are you hurt, my darling?'
— ' No, indeed I am not; but the dog
' would have bit me, if that gentleman
' had not killed him.'—Inſtantaneous was
" the effect this account had; her returning
" blood ruſhed into her face, and beſpoke
" her joy. She claſped the child, ſtill
" dearer to her by this great eſcape, to
" her panting boſom, and beſtowed a
" thouſand careſſes on him. The father's
" eyes beſpoke his impatience to have his
" darling ſon in ſafety, encircled in his
" arms. He ſnatched the boy from the
" anxious mother, and returned thanks to
" Heaven for his preſervation; his ſoul diſ-
" ſolved in gratitude, and paternal fondneſs:
" I was not forgotten; they both came up
" to me; their thanks were innumerable,

" their

" their acknowledgments boundleſs; they
" inſiſted on my returning with them to
" their houſe. I endeavoured in vain
" to excuſe myſelf; the child joined in
" their entreaties; there was no reſiſting
" his innocent perſuaſions. They placed
" me between them, and in this manner
" we proceeded to their houſe, which I
" had before obſerved contiguous to the
" green. As we approached it, a little
" girl, about five years old, ran out to
" them crying. She went up to her bro-
" ther, and throwing her arms about his
" neck, complained that the maid would
" not let her come out to ſee him. The
" boy kiſſed, and told her the ſtory in his
" own manner. The happy parents ſaw
" their pleaſure encreaſed, in the endear-
" ments of their charming offspring. The
" tear of joy trembled in the afflicted mo-
" ther's eye; and a ſmile of content ſat on
" the tender father's face. They looked at
" each other, with a conſcious ſatisfaction,
" and derived new joys from beholding
" the

" the innocent pledges of their virtuous " love. My ſoul callous through miſery, " my heart torn with contending paſſions, " ſaw, but could not feel, this ſcene of " rapture. Inſtead of ſoftening my woes, " it augmented them. — 'I ſhall never ' know what the joys of a father are,' " ſaid " I to myſelf; 'I ſhall never experience ' rapture from the embrace of a child. ' Wretch! Wretch that I am! Can there ' be a ſtate of perdition worſe than this!' " I found my torments grow intolerable, " and reſolved to ſtay no longer in a place " that rendered me miſerable. 'I muſt ' leave you,' ſaid I to them. ' Aſk me not ' why. Happy pair! May heaven en- ' creaſe your felicity! Farewell.'

" As I ſpoke, I ſtrode away with all the " expedition I could, and left them dumb " with aſtoniſhment. When I had eſcaped " the eye of obſervation, I gave a looſe to " my griefs, and indulged my ſorrows. " How much did I lament my dreadful " ſituation! How poignant was my an-

" guiſh!

" guiſh! How piercing was my affliction!
" That night I ſpent under a tree, and no
" ſleep cloſed my eyes, or reſt compoſed
" my perturbed ſpirit. Long before day
" appeared I purſued my journey. To
" what end did I travel! Repoſe awaited
" me not, nor was there any ceſſation from
" my griefs. I could only ſeek it in death.
" That ſtate would afford quiet to me:
" there only could I hope for reſt.

" The road I followed led me to a pretty
" large town. I had taken my reſolution
" to put an end to myſelf; and, in pur-
" ſuance of it, I went into an apothecary's
" ſhop, and aſked for ſome laudanum. The
" journeyman refuſed to ſerve me, but
" called his maſter, who politely aſked
" me what I wanted with the medicine I
" enquired for. I framed a ſtory that pre-
" vailed on him to give it to me. As I
" had told him it was for a third perſon,
" he cautioned me concerning the admini-
" ſtring of it. I pretended to liſten to him

" with

"with attention. He delayed me ſome "time before he gave it to me, being "obliged, as he ſaid, to go up ſtairs for "it, where he always kept thoſe things "which he thought improper to be left in "a ſhop, at the mercy and diſcretion of "ſervants. He came down at length, and "chatted with me; I paid him, and de-"parted in triumph with my purchaſe.

"I walked on. The means of ridding "me from my trouble was now in "my own hands; the thought gave "peace. In the afternoon I arrived at an "inn, and deſiring a room to be prepared "for me, I called for pen and ink, and "ſat down to write to you. The deadly "potion remained by my ſide. During the "writing of that epiſtle I drank it, and "finiſhed the letter. It was ſent off to "you. My mind had now diſengaged it-"ſelf from all worldly matters, and I was "on the road to *that country from whoſe* "*bourne no traveller returns.* I ſought for

"reſt;

" reſt; but was I ſure I ſhould find it
" there? I began to doubt, and one ſcru-
" ple induced another. There was then
" no remedy, no alternative for me. The
" potent draught was now mingled with
" my blood, it had crept through all
" my veins. I was no longer for this
" world: but had I a right to ruſh into the
" other, at my own will and pleaſure. 'I
'did not place myſelf here: am I juſtifi-
'able in quitting this poſt in which I
'have been ſtationed, whenever it may ſuit
'my own convenience or deſire?' Thus
" argued I with myſelf—'An account will
'be required of me of my actions: and
'how ſhall I excuſe the murder of myſelf?
'Am I at greater liberty to kill myſelf
'than another perſon? If not, I have
'done evil, I have ſinned; and ſo ſhort is
'my time upon earth, that I cannot re-
'pent of that ſin. Then eternal torment
'is prepared for me. Horrid, diſmal re-
'flection! What are the pains and woes
'of

'of this life, which is finite, and but of 'a ſhort duration, to tortures that never 'end; are infinite, and extend through all 'eternity! A ſpace that the underſtand-'ing of man comprehendeth not! An 'extenſion of time that hath no period; 'it endureth for ever!' I could not "pray. My ſupplications were turned "into curſes in my mouth; and could I "entreat mercy from that God whom I "had juſt offended, and whoſe image I "ſhould ſpeedily cauſe to be defaced! "I can give you no idea of my ſufferings: "my dear friend, they are not to be de-"ſcribed. Horror ſeized me; I trembled "with fear; a cold ſweat bedewed my "ſhivering limbs. I ſtood awed, con-"founded, ſelf-convicted, as if in the ac-"tual preſence of the juſtly incenſed Deity. "My apprehenſion ſubſided a little; I "grew more calm, but was ſurpriſed that "I had not yet felt the effects of the mor-"tal doſe that was in my bowels. I thought

"to

" to divert my attention from my horrid " ſituation by reading. A book lay in the " window; I opened it, and found it was " the ſacred volume, that contains the pre- " cepts of our religion. 'This may af- 'ford me ſome comfort,' ſaid I: 'The 'God of nature ſpeaks mercy to ſinners. 'He invites the weary and the laden to 'receive reſt. I will read, and be com- 'poſed.' I opened the book, and read. " The Pſalms of David preſented them- " ſelves to me. 'David,' ſaid I, 'was a 'ſinner, yet he repented, and was for- 'given. Let me find comfort in his 'words." But there was none for me! " Theſe ſentences augmented my terror. " Well, I remember them—

For we are conſumed by thine anger: and by thy wrath are we troubled.

Thou haſt ſet our iniquities before thee: our ſecret ſins in the light of thy countenance.

Who

Who knoweth the power of thy wrath?

—'And I ſhall experience it! On me, 'the object of his indignation, will that 'dreaded wrath be exerciſed.'

"Thus I exclaimed in an agony of "terror. My hair roſe an end, my fleſh "crept on my bones. 'I will yet read 'another pſalm,' ſaid I, 'turning over the 'leaves, and fixing my eyes on the follow-'ing:'

Whither ſhall I go from thy ſpirit? Or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence?

If I aſcend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea:

Even there ſhall thy hand lead me, and thy right-hand ſhall hold me.

If I ſay, Surely the night ſhall cover me: Even the night ſhall be light about me.

Yea, the darkneſs hideth not from thee: But the night ſhineth as the day: The darkneſs and the light are both alike to thee.

'And how ſhall I eſcape from his rage, 'whoſe omnipotence I have ſinned againſt? 'Is there any hope of mercy for ſuch a 'wretch as I am?'

The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poiſon whereof drinketh up my ſpirit; the terrors of God do ſet themſelves in array againſt me.

'Already I feel thy powerful venge- 'ance, God of might: and let my ſub- 'miſſion to thy juſtice expiate my crimes.'

"I ſtarted from my ſeat, and threw my- "ſelf on the floor, in a paroxyſm of frenzy "and deſpair. How long I remained "there I know not; but, when my ſenſes "returned,

"returned, I found myſelf in bed.—'Where am I? Do I yet live?'—"I "ſtarted up. My ſurprize and aſtoniſh-"ment cannot be deſcribed. A man ap-"proached the bed.—'How do you find 'yourſelf now, Sir?' "I ſtared wildly at "him, and ſunk down again. I endea-"voured to recollect what was paſſed. It "appeared as the face of a dream. 'I 'am ſenſible that I yet exiſt,' ſaid I to my-"ſelf. 'What miracle has Providence ex-'erted in my favour, to reſcue me thus 'from the jaws of death, and a ſtate of 'endleſs perdition? What thanks do I 'owe to the God of mercy, for redeeming 'me from eternal miſery! It ſhall be the 'employment of my life to pay them.'

"I again roſe up in the bed, and de-"manded of the gentleman, who ſtill "looked at me very attentively, with much "compaſſion and benignity in his counte-"nance, who he was. 'Do not you re-'collect me, Sir?'—'If I had, I ſhould

'not have aſked you that queſtion—Who
'are you? And why are you here?'—
"Do you remember your purchaſing ſome
"laudanum from an apothecary the day
"before yeſterday?"—'I do, and you are
'the man.'—"I am; and, inſtead of the
"mortal doſe you wanted, gave you a
"powerful ſoporific.—'And why didſt
'thou do ſo?'—"Becauſe I imagined and
"feared your deſign to be againſt yourſelf,
"from a wildneſs in your eyes, and a di-
"ſtraction that was very viſible in your
"manner. I amuſed you till I had pointed
"you out to my ſervant, who had orders
"to follow you unnoticed, till he ſaw you
"houſed, and then to inform me where
"you were. He obeyed my commands
"punctually, and I now inform you of
"the deceit I made uſe of; and, if I can
"judge from the ſituation in which you
"were found, you cannot be offended at
"the impoſition.'—'So far from it, that I
'ſhall look upon you hereafter as my beſt
'friend,

'friend, and my greateſt benefactor; as 'on one who, as the inſtrument of a mer-'ciful God, has ſaved me from the com-'miſſion of a ſin that I now ſhudder at 'the thoughts of.'

"I aroſe, and with difficulty dreſſed "myſelf, the agitations I had undergone "had ſo much weakened me. I embraced "my good genius, the apothecary, and "thanked him with great earneſtneſs. I "offered to pay him the expences of his "journey, and for his attendance. He re-"fuſed both. His fortune was eaſy, he "ſaid; and the only gratification he de-"ſired, was to ſee me compoſed and happy. "I redoubled my acknowledgements for "ſuch unexpected generoſity. He ſeemed "very deſirous of knowing what could in-"duce me to make this raſh attempt on my-"ſelf: but I evaded all his queſtions; and, "when he found I was determined to be ſilent "on that head, he deſiſted from his enquiries. "I found myſelf inclinable to take ſome

" ſuſtenance; but when coffee and toaſt
" were brought, I could touch neither. Mr.
" Green, for ſo was the apothecary called,
" was ſurprized at this; and, on examining
" my pulſe and tongue, found every ſymp-
" tom of an approaching fever. He let
" me blood copiouſly, ordered me to bed
" again, and recommended me to the care
" of a very ſkilful phyſician, to whoſe
" knowledge and attention, under God, I
" am indebted for my life. I lay in a dan-
" gerous way near three weeks. At laſt
" the diſorder had a happy turn, and I be-
" gan to recover, though very ſlowly. The
" hand of the Almighty effected my cure
" in this time of danger.

" As I recovered, the traces of my for-
" mer tormenting paſſion vaniſhed inſenſi-
" bly; and, as my health returned, I found
" a peace and tranquillity in my breaſt, ne-
" ver known before. When I was ſuf-
" ficiently re-eſtabliſhed, I took ſhort jour-
" nies hither to you, as I learned in the
" neighbour-

" neighbourhood you were in this part of
" the country. Thus preſerved by the
" immediate intervention of divine power,
" I live but to adore the hand that ſup-
" ported and protected me; to dry the
" tears from my unhappy mother's eyes,
" and to fill her heart with joy: to enjoy
" the return of reaſon and peace, unob-
" ſcured by any clouds of paſſion, or un-
" natural deſire: to live with thee, Rigby,
" the friend of my heart, and the partner
" of my fortune."

" My ſoul rejoices at the great, the hap-
" py alteration in your ſentiments, my dear
" Hillaſton. You can never be thankful
" enough to that Providence which has ſo
" ſignally protected you. I congratulate
" you, I exult in your reſtoration to reaſon
" and to life; for ſurely the painful ſtate
" of conflicting paſſions which you ſuſtain-
" ed, was a daily, an hourly death.

" Since I laſt ſaw you I have been made
" acquainted with woe, and misfortune is

" become familiar to me. But ſuch has
" been the goodneſs of God to me, that I
" have been able to overcome paſſions ſimi-
" lar to yours, which might have deſtroyed
" me."

He began to relate to his friend what had happened to him in his abſence; and walking to and fro on the green, where they had this conference, had juſt turned about, with their faces towards Wilkins's houſe. Engaged in earneſt diſcourſe, they perceived not Hannah Wilkins, who was in ſearch of Rigby, to inform him dinner was ready, moving towards them.

Hannah knew that green was a favourite walk of his, and went thither in purſuit of him. She ſaw ſomebody with him, and the form of the ſtranger was like her Hillaſton's, but his back was to her. As they turned about, ſhe ſent her whole ſoul from her eyes, to inform her of the truth of this circumſtance. She inſtantly recognized his features, but ſhe could not believe

lieve her ſenſes. Alarmed as ſhe was at this extraordinary ſight, ſhe could neither retreat, or go on. Her powers were all chained up by fear and ſurprize. As he approached her, ſhe could no longer ſupport the various paſſions that tore her boſom; and ſhe ſunk down. Hillaſton, who was not at a great diſtance, caught her ere ſhe fell to the ground. Rigby obſerved her only by his friend's flying to her aſſiſtance, for his attention was entirely engaged by the recollection of his own ſtory. But the moment he perceived Hannah's ſituation, and ſaw Hillaſton ſupporting her, the cauſe of her fainting occurred to him inſtantly, and he immediately ran to her aſſiſtance. As ſoon as ſhe opened her eyes, they were turned upon Hillaſton, whom ſhe gazed wildly at, crying out, "Oh, my "God! it is Mr. Hillaſton."

"It is indeed, my dear Hannah."

At the ſound of his voice ſhe returned again. Rigby, who knew the cauſe, de-

ſired his friend to withdraw from her ſight, as the ſurprize occaſioned by her ſeeing him, whom ſhe imagined to be dead, had quite overcome her, eſpecially as ſhe had been but in a weak ſtate of health lately. He obeyed; and Rigby, with difficulty, recovered his fair friend to life again.

"Did not I ſee Mr. Hillaſton here, juſt "now," ſaid ſhe? "Or was it only an ap-"parition?"

"You really ſaw himſelf, Hannah."

"Then he yet lives."

"He does."

"And you have impoſed upon me by a "falſe account of his death."

"No, I aſſure you I believed him dead, "and was as much ſurprized as you "were."

"How have I betrayed myſelf! How "have I expoſed the weakneſs of my heart! "I ſhall die with ſhame."

She burſt into tears, and threw herſelf upon Rigby's boſom. He pitied, and endeavoured

deavoured to compoſe her, by aſſuring her of his friendſhip, and ſilence upon the cauſe of her ſurprize. He then, with her permiſſion, called Hillaſton to him, and her pallid lips trembled while ſhe received his ſalute. Rigby left them together, proceeding ſlowly to the houſe, while he haſtened to apprize the farmer and his wife of his friend's recovery, leſt they might be affected by his too ſudden appearance.

Hillaſton perceived Hannah's emotions, though he was ignorant of the real cauſe of them. He requeſted her to ſupport herſelf by his arm; ſhe obeyed: he obſerved to her, that he was ſorry to ſee her look ſo pale, and feared ſhe had been ill. She replied, ſhe had. She was hardly able to anſwer him. Her heart, ſo long oppreſſed with grief, was now overpowered with joy. But the change was ſo rapid, that it had nearly proved fatal to her, in the weak ſtate ſhe then was.

They were prevented from farther converſation by the appearance of Wilkins and Rigby. The Farmer, overjoyed at the news of his friend's being yet alive, ran out, to congratulate him on his recovery, and bid him welcome to Berkſhire. All was joy and pleaſure. In the afternoon Rigby took his friend out, and informed him of the ſituation of his affairs, and related every thing that had happened ſince he left him at his mother's, to that moment.— "You have not been without your "ſufferings, my friend; but I hope they "are now happily at an end. The ſimi-"larity of our fate has been very remark-"able. Your paſſion for Maria was acci-"dental; but my unhappy attachment to "my ſiſter aroſe from my earlieſt youth: "it was therefore ſo much the more diffi-"cult for me to conquer it. Thanks to "heaven, it is at laſt happily effected; "and though my life was in hazard by "the conflict, I eſteem my freedom cheaply "purchaſed.

" purchaſed. Happineſs awaits us both,
" Rigby. In Lydia's arms, you will forget
" your paſt troubles, and I feel a hope
" that I ſhall experience peace and com-
" fort, riſe in my breaſt."

Rigby went over to Miſs Bennet that evening as uſual, and in part informed her of his friend's hiſtory. She rejoiced with him, that he was yet living, and begged to ſee him. The next day, Hillaſton addreſſed Rigby.

" I can know no happineſs," ſaid he,
" till my mother and ſiſter ſhall be made
" acquainted with my being yet alive, and
" ſo happily reſtored to my reaſon. I
" long to hold that tender mother to my
" breaſt, and to embrace my dear and af-
" flicted ſiſter; but how to break the mat-
" ter to them, I know not. My abrupt
" appearance before them, who are perſuad-
" ed of my death, would be attended with
" the moſt dangerous conſequences. It
" would be as improper to write to them

" by

"by the poſt; they would not believe a "letter to be real. What ſhall I do, Rig- "by? Will you take the trouble of go- "ing there for me, and acquaint them "with this alteration in me, Can you "quit your Lydia for ſo long a time."

"I will do any thing to promote your "welfare, Hillaſton," ſaid he; "and I be- "lieve this method of breaking the matter "to your family, is the moſt proper and "beſt you can propoſe. I will go there "in a day or two, but you muſt not ex- "pect me to ſtay long, for I muſt return "as expeditiouſly as poſſible."

"As ſoon as you pleaſe: but you cannot "blame me for wiſhing to communicate this "matter to them directly. It is abſolutely "neceſſary."

They went over to Mrs. Wilcox's, where they dined. Miſs Bennet remembered Hil- laſton again, but he was ſo much altered for the better, that he was extreamly pleaſ- ing to them both: he had a great deal of good

good nature, mixed with an eaſy politeneſs; delivered, in a very ſpirited and ſenſible manner, the obſervations he had made in his walks; and was not deſtitute of humor. He regarded the glances of mutual affection, of heart-felt ſatisfaction, of joy and rapture, that paſſed between Lydia and his friend, with a great degree of pleaſure: it encreaſed his happineſs. His honeſt heart exulted in the good fortune of his friend: as they returned home, he could not help congratulating Rigby.

"Providence reſpects our virtue," ſaid he, "and is determined to reward it. If "wealth, beauty and love can create hap-"pineſs, you will ſurely be happy; if "there is a bleſſed ſtate on earth, it is to "be found in mutual love. I fear I ſhall "never experience it, I am not formed for "winning a woman's affections; but I "could make a good huſband I think."

"You are miſtaken in your ſuppoſitions "of not being able to win a woman's af-

"fections.

"fections. What would you think of a "woman poſſeſſed of virtue, honour, and real "delicacy of ſentiment, who could admire "the goodneſs of your heart, and the "excellency of your manners, through that "cloud of diſtraction which veiled them, "and which ſhe lamented at the time ſhe "felt the tendereſt ſenſations; and whoſe "grief for your ſuppoſed death, almoſt "ended her days, though in the bloom of "youth: Could you love ſuch a one?"

"I could grapple her to my ſoul with hooks "of ſteel: my gratitude, my honour would "be all concerned, and ſhe would not re-"pent the preference ſhe had given me. "But I cannot believe that ſhe exiſts; "tell me Rigby, is it true?"

"It is, really."

"Then tell me, I conjure you, who it is."

"That I cannot do: chance made "me acquainted with her attachment; "judgement ſhould direct you, you "would not be long at a loſs; but it

"can

" can never paſs my lips, which have pro-
" miſed to conceal it."

" You have made me very uneaſy:
" would to Heaven I knew who it was,
" but it ſhall go hard with me, if I do
" not find it out."

The next day was fixed on for Rigby's journey into Cambridgeſhire: in the morning, he went to ſee Miſs Bennet.

" Why hangs that cloud upon your
" brow, my deareſt Lydia; you look de-
" jected and melancholly: are you ill?
" inform me what ails you, to cauſe that
" change in your countenance."

" I have been diſturbed by the moſt
" horrid dreams all night, that ever I had;
" and they have made ſo ſtrong an impreſ-
" ſion on me, and ſo terrified me, that I
" have not recovered myſelf."

" Let not ſhadows diſturb you, my
" charming Lydia; thy innocence and vir-
" tue defend thee againſt fear."

" I am not apt to pay any great attention
" to dreams,—but ſuch a ſucceſſion of them!

" I

"I thought I had you in my arms, all "covered with blood; I waked, and found "myſelf all of a tremble. Again I doz- "ed, and thought we were walking in a "meadow together, and all of a ſudden "you ſunk from beſide me, and was gone "I knew not whither. While I lamented "you, ſome frightful ſpectre carried me "to the top of an high mountain, and "plunged me down a precipice, which I "was an age in falling. I had many other "dreams equally horrid."

"Do not fright yourſelf with effects "that proceed from ſo many different "cauſes. I hope no misfortune will hap- "pen to you till I return, and I will make "my ſtay as ſhort as may be."

"Why! where are you going?" ſaid ſhe, with an affrighted look.

"I am going into Cambridgeſhire, to "inform Mrs. Hillaſton, of her ſon's be- "ing yet alive. She is a worthy woman; "and the friendſhip of her ſon, and her "regard for me, demand this from me.

"I

" I will not ſtay: my beſt beloved Lydia,
" do not be alarmed."

" Did you not promiſe that you would
" not leave me?" ſaid ſhe, looking at him with ineffable tenderneſs, the tears ruſhing into her eyes: " I ſee how you keep your
" word."

" Oh Lydia, your doubts diſtreſs me
" beyond expreſſion. I did promiſe you
" not to leave you: but cannot my abſence
" be excuſed for ſo ſhort a time? I will
" have a reliance on providence, to guard
" thee from danger: without that, my aid
" would avail but little. Do not you be un-
" eaſy."

" I am miſerable, and I cannot help it:
" my ſoul forebodes ſome dreadful mis-
" fortunes."

" You are low ſpirited only, my love,
" theſe dreams have terrified you: be aſ-
" ſured of my fidelity, my affection, my
" inviolable love; and no power on earth
" ſhall keep me long from you. I ſhall be
" wretched

" wretched till I ſee you again, till I am " bleſſed with thy ſmiles. Do not diſtreſs " yourſelf and me," ſaid he, kiſſing off the tears that trickled in ſilent ſorrow down her pale and frigid cheeks, " by theſe ground- " leſs apprehenſions: I will return in ten " days, or a fortnight at fartheſt."

" Do not go then," ſaid ſhe, preſſing his hand in hers, " but ſtay with me: I " ſhall never ſee you again."

With the moſt endearing blandiſhments did he ſoothe her diſturbed mind, and conſole her grief. At laſt ſhe conſented to let him depart. " Ah," ſaid ſhe, " if you " will go, I cannot prevent you; but with " the utmoſt reluctance do I let you ſepa- " rate yourſelf from me. I hope we ſhall " meet again at your return: but I have " the moſt unaccountable fears that we " ſhall not: but you laugh at my folly."

" By every ſacred power, did not this " very urgent buſineſs call me, I pay ſo " great a reſpect to your tender tears, that

" I

"I would comply with your deſires, and "remain here."

"Well," replied ſhe, "I will conſent "to your departure, and only requeſt you "to make haſte back."

He promiſed he would, and ſealed thoſe promiſes upon her lips. Her tears wetted his cheek, which he preſſed cloſe to hers; nor could he prevent at that inſtant, diſſolved as he was with tenderneſs and love, the eſcape of one tear to accompany hers. He tore himſelf away from her with great unwillingneſs: he had never experienced ſuch affection from her before. He was quite unmaned by her behaviour: and though his reaſon told him that her fears were without foundation, yet he was very much concerned at them.

He related to Hillaſton, who accompanied him part of the way in the afternoon, what had paſſed between him and Lydia; recommending it to him to ſee her often, in the few days that he ſhould ſtay behind him

him in Berkſhire. For it had been agreed between them, that when Rigby had prepared the way, he ſhould follow him home; for he not only longed to ſee his mother and ſiſter, but had great occaſion for money to pay the perſons who had taken care of him in his illneſs, and he could not procure any without going home. What Rigby had ſaid to him, concerning this woman that had taken ſuch a liking to him, was always uppermoſt in his mind. Though ignorant of the perſon, he could not help feeling ſome favourable ſentiments riſe in his boſom towards her. "Her heart muſt be ſuſceptible of pity, "it muſt be poſſeſſed of humanity," ſaid he to himſelf. "Could I be the object of love "in a ſtate of frenzy! No; it was com-"paſſion for my diſtraction firſt inſpired "her breaſt with tender thoughts. I wiſh "I knew who it was, only that I might "thank her."

His—

His uneaſineſs encreaſed every hour, it grew painful at laſt; it made him thoughtful. Hannah's vigilant eye perceived an alteration in his countenance, and was concerned at it. Two of the three days he paſſed away in this ſtate: on the third, walking in the garden, he obſerved a piece of paper crumpled up in a careleſs manner, lying on the ground before him; it had the appearance of being lately dropped. An inreſiſtible curioſity impelled him to take it up. He opened it: the writing on it ſeemed to be that of a woman. To his no ſmall ſurprize, he read theſe words.

"The conduct of a virtuous woman, "ſhould reſemble a ſtream of pure wa- "ter, which, as it runs, diſcovers its bot- "tom. All diſſimulation is deſigned to "conceal a crime, for virtue has no oc- "caſion for ſcreen." This was Hillaſton's ſentiment—

" ſentiment—" He is gone—But ſhall I ne-
" ver forget——"

The reſt was torn off. He could not conceive what this meant—He might have made uſe of ſuch expreſſions—But when he knew not—The remark at the bottom of it was ſtill more puzzling—He ſtrolled about loſt in conjecture—He began, at laſt, to fix upon Hannah Wilkins—Conviction ruſh'd upon him—He reflected upon his former behaviour to her—her ſurpriſe at ſeeing him—Beſides, Rigby's being ſo well acquainted with her ſentiments, confirmed him in his notions. He was not diſpleaſed at tracing out this ſecret; and he was ſtill better pleaſed at finding Hannah Wilkins to be the perſon he wiſhed to know. He had always a great friendſhip for her—he eſteemed her good qualities. His heart could be eaſily ſoftened into love. On one proof did he depend for certainty as to the hand-writing of this paper—He contrived to get her to write a few words—

Upon

Upon compariſon he found the characters to be exactly alike.—" Tis well," ſaid he to himſelf, overjoyed at the ſucceſs of his ſcheme; " if I can render my life happy, " Hannah, I am willing to ſpend mine with " thee"—

From that moment he redoubled his attention to her, and mixed a tenderneſs in his manner and words that ſhe had never perceived in him before. He took leave of her in the moſt affectionate manner, told her he ſhould ſoon return, and had ſomething particular to ſay to her that he hoped would not diſpleaſe her. Her bluſhes beſpoke her confuſion, while ſhe ſtammered out that ſhe ſhould be always glad to ſee him—" Perhaps," ſaid ſhe, when he departed, " he ſees my weakneſs, and " deſpiſes me for it—perhaps he may alſo " love—but I fear it is not me."

In the mean time Rigby purſued his journey, and arrived at Mrs. Hillaſton's without any accident. It was near four

months ſince he had been there before, and then had but juſt received ſo great a ſhock, that he looked more like one dead than alive. They were pleaſed to ſee that he had recovered his health and ſpirits again; but ſtill an unavailing ſorrow prevailed in the family, ſtill the tear fell to Hillaſton's memory, and the ſigh roſe at the mention of his name. How ſhould he acquaint them with this happy reverſe that awaited them? It required all his ſkill and tenderneſs. As they ſat engaged in ſocial chat that evening, he mentioned ſeveral inſtances of perſons, whom their friends had ſuppoſed to be dead, having been, nevertheleſs, reſtored to their families again. "Ah," ſaid the old Lady, "ſuch things "might have formerly happened, and may "now—but I am not to be ſo happy."

"You can't tell, Madam; the goodneſs "of God is not circumſcribed, nor are you "excluded from his mercy."

"I hope

"I hope not: yet I am wretched—I loved
"my hapleſs ſon—I loved him perhaps too
"well—but ſure a mother's fondneſs can-
"not be a crime. While he lived his ſenſes
"were diſturbed, and he created grief in-
"ſtead of pleaſure for me. A dreadful
"diſorder carried him, in a moment, to his
"grave, and no friend near him to cloſe his
"eyes. Is he not dead? Did not you
"yourſelf inform me of it?"

"Indeed I did, Madam, but——"

"Why that heſitation; could you be ſo
"barbarous as to impoſe on me—You
"could not, I know your humanity and
"goodneſs—you are incapable of ſuch a
"thing. Beſides, you wept for his death,
"and your tears were not feigned."

"They were not, I aſſure you, yet—"

"What means that, yet?—Do not ſport
"with a mother's ſorrow."

"I do not, Madam; I honour, reſpect,
"and pity you."

"Then explain yourſelf."

"Might I not have been impoſed on "myſelf?"

"Young man," ſaid ſhe, looking ſternly at him, "I have had too good an opinion "of you to ſuppoſe you mean and baſe "enough to jeſt with miſery. Let the "agonies of an afflicted parent, let the "eloquent tears of that unhappy ſiſter pre-"vail on you to clear up this myſterious "behaviour of yours."

"I will not forfeit your good opinion, "I aſſure you, Madam; nor ſhall my be-"haviour or language be myſterious. In "a little time I hope to explain myſelf to "your ſatisfaction, to your comforts."

"And can you be ſo barbarous to with-"hold that comfort from diſtreſs!—How "can you be ſo cruel!"

"It would be cruelty to have imparted "it to you. Exceſs of joy has frequently "worſe effects than exceſs of ſorrow."

"Where would your deceitful words "lead me? What ſtrange hopes have you "given

" given riſe to in my breaſt! What am I
" to think?—Perhaps—but 'tis madneſs
" and frenzy to indulge the thought—Is
" not my unhappy boy numbered with the
" dead? does he not moulder in aſhes?"

Rigby remained ſilent: greatly was he affected with her diſtreſs, yet more did he fear to inform her of the truth of the matter.

" Why will you not ſpeak?—Would you
" have me think that poor child yet lives?
" Is it ſo?" ſaid ſhe, falling on her knees before him: " pity a mother's tranſports,
" and ſatisfy her doubts."

" Oh, my good Lady," ſaid he, raiſing her up, " compoſe yourſelf—much happi-
" neſs and joy await you."

" Say, does he yet live!"

" He does."

" Thanks, thanks to thee thou God
" of mercy. But may I believe you?"

" You may: he is alive and well; re-
" ſtored to his reaſon and himſelf."

"It is too much—too much. But per-
"haps you may be impoſed upon again."

"It is impoſſible; I have converſed with
"him within theſe three days."

"Yet I doubt, and yet I fear.—Sure if
"he was alive, he would ſend me ſome
"teſtimonial of it."

"He has: I have a letter for you"

He produced it. She ſnatch'd it eagerly out of his hands, and broke the ſeal. "It "is his hand writing; it is his indeed!" She read thus;

"Before my friend delivers this to the
"beſt of mothers, ſhe will be informed that
"her ſon yet lives—lives to dry up thoſe
"tears which ſhe and his dear ſiſter ſhed
"upon his account; to chear her declining
"years, and be the comfort and happineſs
"of her age. I have eſcaped the jaws of
"death, by the ſingular mercy of God,
"and am once more reſtored to my reaſon.
"In a few days I ſhall receive your bleſs-
"ing.

" ing.—I long to embrace you, and my
" poor ſiſter. Till then, and ever, believe
" me your duteous, and truly affectionate

" RICHARD HILLASTON."

Miſs Hillaſton took this from her mother, to be aſſured of the truth of it, as well as her eyes, dimmed with tears, would permit her to read it.—" This is happineſs " indeed!—I can ſcarcely ſupport it. I " muſt entreat your pardon, Mr. Rigby, " but I muſt go to my cloſet, and pour " out my grateful heart in thankſgivings " to the author of my happineſs—it will " compoſe me."

She retired. In the mean time her daughter remained with Rigby, of whom ſhe aſked ten thouſand queſtions; all of which he ſatisfied her, and prepared her for the ſight of her brother. In about half an hour Mrs. Hillaſton returned; ſhe was more tranquil, but ſtill overjoyed. She embraced Rigby, and called him her child.

You ſhall be ever as one to me. They ſpent the remainder of the evening with great happineſs, and Rigby retired early to bed. In the morning Mrs. Hillaſton apologiſed to him for neglecting to give him the letter laſt night which ſhe then put in his hands; but her tranſports were ſo great that they drove every other conſideration out of her head. There was no occaſion, he ſaid, to make any excuſe—"It came "from Mrs. Leeſon, I believe, and has "been here but a day." He turned pale at that intelligence; but broke it open, and found a letter from his mother, conceived in theſe terms:

"When I ſaw you laſt, my dear child, "my agitations were ſo great that I had "not recollection enough to inform you of "what may materially concern your in-"tereſt. You have an aunt of your fa-"ther's, who lives at D——, in Warwick-"ſhire; ſhe is poſſeſſed of a large fortune,

"and

"and you are the neareſt relation ſhe has "in the world. Your hapleſs father, ere "he died, was reconciled to her, and ſhe "promiſed to make him her heir. The "incloſed letter will introduce you to her. "She muſt now be greatly advanced in "years, therefore I would have you be as "expeditious as poſſible in this application "to her. Your look will prove that her "Kingſley was your father. If, when you "return, you go to Mrs. K——, a milli-"ner at Bury, you will meet your ſiſter "there. If I can come and take a laſt "embrace, I will, for I ſhall be very "anxious to know the ſucceſs of your "journey. Farewell my dear boy, and be "aſſured I am your affectionate, and un-"happy mother.

"M. L."

The incloſed letter to Mrs. Parkington, contained little more than a recapitulation of thoſe facts which the reader is already

acquainted with, recommending the bearer, as her nephew, to her notice.

When he read theſe, he began to conſider how he could reconcile this command of his mother's, and the deſire he had to ſee her once more, with the promiſe he had made to Lydia. But he thought he might be able both to go and ſee his aunt, and return, within the limited time, to Berkſhire. Beſides, the conſideration of having an equivalent fortune to his Lydia's, that ſhe might not take a beggar to her arms, determined him, more eſpecially, to try how Mrs. Parkinton would receive him. His heart ſwelled with conſcious pride at the thought of being ſomething like a match for her in point of wealth. With that view he reſolved to ſet forward in the afternoon. He did not inform Mrs. Hillaſton particularly where he was going, or on what buſineſs, leſt he might be diſappointed, but promiſed to return to them in a week; and having told them on that day

day they might expect his friend, ſet off for Warwickſhire. He performed his journey with expedition, and arrived at the town where ſhe lived about noon. Her habitation was well known: and when he had cleaned and refreſhed himſelf he went to ſee her. He was introduced to her; and having demanded his buſineſs, he delivered the letter to her, which ſhe took out her ſpectacles to read, deſiring him to ſit down very cordially. As ſhe peruſed the letter, he had an opportunity of examining her perſon. She was ſeated in her arm-chair, and was rather corpulent; her infirmities, for ſhe was then near eighty, having prevented her riſing to receive him when he came in. Her hair was white as ſilver; her countenance was yet ruddy, and ſhe appeared freſh and healthy: the effects of temperance and regularity.—"This letter, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "informs me you are my nephew. Come

"here, and ſit near me, that I may look at "you."

He obeyed her inſtantly.

"Till within theſe few days, Madam, I "never knew that I had ſuch a relation ſo "near and ſo venerable, or I ſhould have "paid my reſpects to you before now, "and aſſured you of my affection."

She looked at him very attentively, for ſome time, without ſpeaking.

"I believe," ſaid ſhe at laſt, "that you "muſt be my nephew indeed. You have "your father's face, nay, his voice. I re-"member well, very well, when the poor "young man came to me, before he was "married to your mother—and I remem-"ber Doctor Wakefield too very well—he "was a very worthy man. But I never "knew that my nephew was married to "his daughter.—And how came you to "be called Rigby?"

He explained theſe matters as well as he could, and the old Lady ſeemed very well pleaſed

pleaſed with him. She made him ſtay with her, and every hour the likeneſs of his father was more viſible in him. The many tokens of reſpect and affection that he ſhewed to her gave her a great deal of ſatisfaction. Nor was this regard feigned or hypocritical. He had naturally a great veneration for age. It inſpired him with awe and reſpect: the reflection of the pleaſure he ſhould receive himſelf from the attention that younger people ſhould pay him when advanced in years, influenced his conduct, and reglated his behaviour. His good-nature was not offended at the length or number of the ſtories ſhe told him concerning the family: he liſtened to them attentively and patiently, and even ſolicited her to repeat ſome of them. The next morning he found the old Lady up as ſoon as he was; and when he talked of returning, ſhe inſiſted on his ſtaying a week with her. This he told her, though happy as he ſhould be in her company, could not be

be complied with at that time, but he would ſoon pay her another viſit. In the courſe of their converſation ſhe told him he muſt change his name to Kingſley, which he promiſed to do. As he determined to quit her early the next morning, ſhe took her leave of him very affectionately over night, and gave him a large ſeal ring which had been a long time in the family, and which ſhe regarded very much. He was obliged to promiſe to return to her ſoon again—and they parted. His deſign was to proceed to Bury, in hopes to ſee his mother. He had already reached the borders of Suffolk, and was pleaſing himſelf with the expectation of meeting his good friends, and returning in the proper time to Lydia: for he had written twice to her, and aſſured her how anxious he was to be with her again. He was in a road that he knew nothing of, and was in a ſtrange country. As he doubted which way to go, an elderly gentleman overtook him, of whom he enquired

quired his road to Bury. The other very courteouſly replied that he was going part of the way himſelf, and would direct him properly. Rigby thanked him, and they rode on in an eaſy pace together for a mile or better. They both ſeemed very well pleaſed with each other; the old gentleman with his companion's modeſty and good ſenſe; and his jocularity and facetiouſneſs was as agreeable to Rigby, whom he invited home with him where he was then going, but which he excuſed himſelf from, ſaying he was in haſte to meet a friend at Bury, but expreſſed many obligations to him for his civility. They were almoſt at the road where Rigby was to part from him, when paſſing by a narrow lane, three fellows, armed with cutlaſſes and bludgeons, on foot, ruſhed out, and one of them ſeized the old gentleman's horſe by the bridle, and made a ſtroke at him. Rigby ſaw his danger and received it upon a ſtout whip which he had in his hand, and with

which

which he immediately knocked the aſſailant down. Inſtantly he found himſelf receive a heavy blow on the ſhoulder, which, however, did not prevent him from drawing his piſtol from the holſters, which he fired at one of them without ſucceſs. He had not time to take the other out before he got a blow on the ſide of the head with a ſtick, which brought him to the ground: and now would the ruffians have executed their bloody purpoſes, if they had not been prevented by the appearance of three travellers, whom the report of the piſtol had alarmed, making up to them as faſt as they could. The two villains ran off up the lane; and the third lay ſtill on the earth, ſtunned with the blows he had received. Near him was extended Rigby, in a much worſe condition; for he had received a deep cut in the ſhoulder with a cutlaſs, and a contuſion in his head, with the fall he had from his horſe. The people who came up to them, and enquired

what

what was the matter, were ſoon informed by the gentleman, who knew one of them. They ſeized and ſecured the robber, and then aſſiſted Rigby to mount his horſe, which he was hardly able to ſit. One was diſpatched for a ſurgeon, while the others helped to ſupport him till he got to the gentleman's houſe, which was but a ſhort way off. But as ſoon as he was taken down, he fainted away with loſs of blood, and was carried ſenſeleſs into the houſe.

This affair naturally created a great alarm, and the gentleman's wife came to ſee what was the matter. To prevent her being ſhocked, he told her in general and ſhort terms how the affair happened.

"Generous young man," ſaid ſhe, "let "me go and try to aſſiſt him; perhaps I "may be of ſome ſervice to him."

She went to the couch on which he was laid: but judge if thou canſt, reader, of the agony that ſeized the heart of Mrs. Leeſon, for it was Mrs. Leeſon herſelf, when

when ſhe beheld her beloved ſon, lying pale, bloody and ſpeechleſs before her! Exceſs of horror tied up her tongue, and reſtrained her ſteps, but it was only for a moment.

"Oh good God," exclaimed ſhe, clapping her hands together, "why do I live "to ſee this hour! Oh my ſon, my ſon," added ſhe, throwing herſelf on the bleeding youth—"yet open thy eyes—live but for "a moment, that I may bleſs you."

Her cries rouſed him to life.

"Where am I?" ſaid he in a faint voice.

"In your mother's arms, never to be "ſeparated from her."

At that moment the ſurgeon arrived, and began to examine his patient. Maria had followed her mother, and no ſooner had ſhe ſeen Rigby in that condition than ſhe fainted away. Mr. Leeſon was in a ſtate of aſtoniſhment; he knew not what to do, or what to think. He neither attended

tended to his wife, his child, or to the ſtranger who had been wounded in his defence, and by whoſe means he eſcaped unhurt. The ſurgeon drew him from this reverie, by deſiring that the ſick man might be put to bed, and kept extremely quiet, for he could not think him out of danger. Mr. Leeſon's generoſity and humanity returned; and he ſaw theſe orders executed himſelf, and that every proper care was taken of him. The paſt ſcene then recurred to his mind, and the more he thought of it, the more inexplicable it was to him. He returned to the parlour, where Maria, though diſſolved in tears herſelf, was endeavouring to comfort her afflicted mother. He eyed them with a look of anger, and ſeated himſelf in ſullen ſilence. At length he ſpoke, and addreſſed himſelf to his wife.

"It is to you, Madam, I muſt apply "for an explanation of this extraordinary "ſcene: what am I to underſtand by it?"

He

He pauſed, and the weeping matron could not ſpeak.

"Why do not you anſwer me? And "when you do, be careful that you do "not trifle. You call this young man "your ſon; the agonies the ſight of him, "in that dreadful condition, threw you "into, are a ſufficient proof of that aſ- "ſertion. You came as a maiden to my "arms: my unſuſpecting credulity re- "ceived you as ſuch; as ſuch I have "honoured and eſteemed you. Am I to "have the mortification to find, in this "evening hour of my life, that I have "ſpent my days with a wanton? Dread- "ful thought! The ſtain will lie upon "you, my poor children, and on me. "— What ſhall I do!"

"I needed not theſe injurious calumnies, "Mr. Leeſon, to aggravate my diſtreſs; "but they are equally falſe and vain. "The character I have ſupported as your "wife for ſo many years might have ſaved "me, I think, from this imputation, and

"eſtabliſhed

"eſtabliſhed my fame: but though I am "not guilty, I may be culpable."

As ſhe ſpoke ſhe roſe, and went out of the room. Leeſon was now more diſturbed than ever. This was a confeſſion that, he thought, no woman could be induced to make. As Maria was following her mother, he called her back.—"What is the "meaning of all this? Do you know "any thing of your mother's behaviour?"

"Nothing, Sir," ſaid ſhe, trembling at the ſternneſs with which he addreſſed her, "but what would do honour to any wo-"man."

"Have you both conſpired to deceive "me? Do you know any thing of this "ſon of hers? Did you ever ſee him be-"fore?"

"I have, Sir, but—"

"But what? Speak! or be dumb for "ever."

"I cannot, indeed, papa, without my "mother's permiſſion."

"Un-

"Ungracious girl! Do you alſo join "in my diſhonour? Hence from my pre- "ſence, nor ſee my face till you know your "duty to me."

She retired, weeping. He walked about the room with haſty ſteps, labouring under the greateſt agitations.—"I will go to her, "I am reſolved," ſaid he, "and force the "ſecret of my infamy from her. Yet no "tongue, however malicious, has been "able to impeach her fame ſince ſhe has "been my wife. With a careful eye I "watched her paths; nor did ſhe, as I "have the greateſt reaſon to believe, ever "turn aſide from the road of virtue. But "ſtrange ſuſpicions ariſe. She would not "liſten to my addreſſes for a long time. "She had another lover too before me. "He, I ſuppoſe, enjoyed thoſe charms "which I ſo fooliſhly thought were reſerved "for me. This is horrid! and I have "lived a wittol, a dupe, impoſed upon by "the ſtaleſt artifices; whilſt diſgrace and "ſhame

"ſhame muſt ever attend me, and my fa-
"mily. It is not to be borne! I will make
"the traitreſs inform me of her own ini-
"quity. She has even eſtranged the af-
"fections of my daughter from me: I
"will know the worſt inſtantly, and be no
"longer doubtful of my misfortune."

He went to ſearch for her; ſhe was not in her own apartment: he looked in others, and at laſt turned his ſteps towards Rigby's room. He entered gently, leſt he ſhould diſturb him; and there he ſaw his wife ſitting by the ſide of the bed, gazing attentively on the youth, who was fallen into a ſlumber. By her ſide ſat Maria, the picture of grief; for her mother's affliction and her father's anger had greatly affected her.

This ſcene ſtruck him forcibly. He loved his wife, and that love made him careful of her: but he could not ſee her thus weeping over the fruit of another man's love, without feeling a degree of

rage,

rage, hardly tolerable; yet his gratitude for the perſon who had delivered him from the hands of aſſaſſins, and had ſuffered ſo much by the generous action, reſtrained his fury, and he ſtifled his reſentment for the preſent. He contented himſelf with beckoning to Maria, and aſking her what was the young man's name? to which, ſhe replied "Rigby." And he turned upon his heel, and went out again as ſilently as he entered. "Rigby, Rigby," ſaid he, as he walked towards the garden: "that is "not the name that I heard mentioned "as her lover. That was Kingſley, if I "recollect aright:—then ſhe has had varie-"ty. I ſhall go diſtracted."

His hapleſs wife yet ſuffered more than he did. The conſequences of diſcovering her ſon, in the agony of her heart, were preſent to her imagination. She knew Mr. Leeſon's jealous temper; and her own meanneſs in concealing the truth of her ſituation from him, when ſhe married

ried him, ſtruck her moſt forcibly at that inſtant. She foreſaw that all her happineſs with him was at an end, and their future life, if they ſhould remain together, would be a continual ſcene of miſery. On his part, eternal reproaches and upbraidings, would every hour remind her of her faults.

Theſe reflections ſuggeſted themſelves to her very often, ſince ſhe met her ſon at Mrs. Hillaſton's. The fear of a diſcovery, her conſcious ſhame, and her dread of her huſband, preyed on her mind, and prejudiced her health. This laſt interview laid the axe to the root. She at that inſtant had her ſon, whom ſhe ſo tenderly loved, before her eyes, removed but one ſtep from death. This, added to the conflicts ſhe had before endured, were more than her nature could ſupport. As her eyes gazed on her wounded child, a miſt was gathered over them, a thick film obſcured her ſight; her thickening blood throbbed

tumultuouſly in her tumid veins; her brain boiled in its cells.

"Maria," ſaid ſhe, "lead me to my "chamber—Oh, my head, my head! I "ſhall ſoon ceaſe to be tormented, my "woes will ſoon be at an end."

Maria, terrified at her mother's words, obeyed in ſilence, and found that ſhe had ſpoken but too truly. Aſſiſtance was immediately called, and ſhe was put to bed in a very diſtempered ſtate. Mr. Leeſon was informed of this, and went to ſee her; but he found her ſo ill, that he was really alarmed for her ſafety, and immediately ſent for phyſicians and proper help. His affections returned at the ſight of her danger, and he no more remembered his ſuſpicions. He even reproached himſelf, as the cauſe of her diſorder, by treating her ſo harſhly. This ſelf-condemnation was encreaſed, when, in her delirium, for ſhe loſt her ſenſes that night, ſhe entreated

to be ſcreened from her huſband. He was now truly wretched.

In five days, Rigby recovered himſelf ſurpriſingly, and was able to leave his bed. But his mind was by no means in as good a ſtate as his body; his abſence from Lydia, and the uneaſineſs ſhe would feel at his protracted ſtay; his own deſire to be with her, and the preſent impoſſibility of gratifying that deſire, gave him more torment than his corporeal ſufferings. He thought of ſending for Hillaſton; but his hopes of being in another three days able to go home in a carriage, prevented him. This trouble was augmented by the converſation he had that day with Mr. Leeſon.

"I give you joy, Sir," ſaid he, as he came into the room, "of the good news "which your ſurgeon has informed me "of. There are now no doubts of your "recovery, provided you take a little "care."

"That which your goodneſs has taken "of me, renders me cautious."

"Oh, ſay nothing of that: am not I "indebted to you for my life? for I learn "by the fellow whom we took, that there "was a deſign to murder me; and can I "be too grateful to him, who has been "the means of my preſervation? ſay no "more, Sir, on that head, for I ſhall ne-"ver be able to return the obligation."

"You over-rate my ſervices, Sir. An "action that ſprung merely from humani-"ty, deſerves not theſe particular acknow-"ledgements. But ſhall I beg to know to "whom I have been happy enough to ren-"der this ſervice?"

"My name is Leeſon, Sir."

"Leeſon!" ſaid he, ſtarting; "I was "informed otherwiſe."

"You are right, ſir; you were ſo. But "it was by deſire of the ſurgeon."

"And what myſtery was couched under "that prohibition?—Leeſon!"

"You

"You ſeem to know the name."

"I do—ſomething like a dream recurs "to my diſturbed imagination, of having "ſeen——"

"Your mother."

"Ha! where did you learn that ſecret?"

"From her diſtreſs at ſeeing you brought "here, wounded and bloody."

"Good Heaven! and are you her huſ- "band?"

"I am that unhappy man!—"

"Why unhappy? her virtue would ren- "der any man bleſſed."

He anſwered only with a deep ſigh.

"Forgive the impatience, and curioſity, "Sir, which your behaviour excites. Why "do you ſigh? cannot I be permitted to "ſee my mother?"

"I fear not at preſent."

"Why, for Heaven's ſake?"

"She is very ill."

Rigby ſtared wildly at him, but ſpoke not.

"She is indeed very ill," continued he, "and would not know you if you were to "ſee her."

"Good God!" ſaid Rigby, ſtriking his breaſt, "how long has ſhe been thus?"

Mr. Leeſon informed him, and anſwered every queſtion he aſked, with the greateſt politeneſs; telling him, that as now he was able to ſee company, that he would come with his permiſſion, and mingle tears with him, and partake of his ſorrow.

Soon after he quitted the room, Maria came to Rigby, and with a flood of tears, acquainted him with the particulars of her mother's ſituation, of whoſe recovery the phyſicians gave no hopes. He could neither give to, or receive comfort from his weeping ſiſter. He ſat in a ſtate of ſilent grief, almoſt inſenſible to every thing about him. He prevailed on her to let him ſee his mother, and ſhe promiſed to comply with it; but it only encreaſed his affliction, to ſee her ſo much altered, and hear her ravings.

ravings. Mr. Leeſon viſited him frequently, as well as Maria, whenever ſhe could ſpare time from her attendance on her mother. The former conceived a very great regard for him: ſo much did his modeſt and reſpectful behaviour win upon him, who had at firſt, little leſs than an abſolute averſion to him, conſidering him as the proof of his wife's guilt.

In ſorrow and lamentations did this afflicted family ſpend their time for three days. On the eighth of her illneſs, they received the pleaſing account, that ſhe ſlept well the preceding night, breathed eaſier, and ſeemed more compoſed than ſhe had yet been, and her fever appeared to be a little abated.

This gave them all great joy; and they put up their prayers to Heaven, to reſtore her to them once more. She remained for ſome hours in a ſlumber: ſo it was not known what effect her reſt had upon her.

About ten, their pleaſure was encreaſed, by hearing that ſhe had recovered her ſenſes, and knew every body. This circumſtance re-inſpired them with hopes; and Mr. Leeſon went to ſee her. In a few minutes he returned, and informed Rigby and Maria that their mother wanted to ſee them all together. They followed him into the room; and Rigby, throwing himſelf on his knees at the bedſide, preſſed her hand to his trembling lips.

"Bleſſed be the God that has reſtored "me to my ſenſes, my dear child, that I "may ſee you ere I die, that I may give "my bleſſing to you, that I may charge "thee to vindicate my name, when I am "no more. I feel myſelf going, life "ebbs apace; my nature, exhauſted by "the violent attacks of this dreadful diſ-"order, makes this one effort to repel its "force: but I am ſo weak that I cannot "hold it long. This is that dreadful "pauſe that precedes diſſolution. In this "hour, the ſoul, loſing every hope of being

" ing re-united to the body in this world,
" only looks forward to the next. In
" this moment, can I pretend to utter the
" words of falſehood, or ſhall I ruſh into
" eternity, loaden with a guilty lye? I
" look up to thee, my honoured, my be-
" loved, yet injured huſband, oppreſſed
" with conſcious ſhame; I look up to thee
" for pardon: a fooliſh weakneſs prevent-
" ed my informing you before we were u-
" nited, that I had been married to Mr.
" Kingſley, and fear prevented me after-
" wards; but this deception has gone
" near to my heart, it has occaſioned this
" illneſs. My life is the ſacrifice of my
" crimes, and may it atone for them—
" I hold it criminal to have concealed
" any thing from ſo tender, ſo kind an
" huſband: yet, let me not deſcend to the
" grave, without thy pardon; let not my
" laſt hour be marked with thy indignation.
" Never have I injured thee, in any other
" inſtance, ſince I became your wife; and

" maſter of my affection, as you were of
" my perſon, my only ſtudy was to en-
" creaſe your happineſs. Let me not want
" thy forgiveneſs, to enable me to bear
" the approach of death with more forti-
" tude."

Mr. Leeſon was moved to an exceſs by this addreſs. He attempted to ſpeak; ſobs and groans ſtopped his utterance; his tears flowed down his cheeks, and he ſtood torn by paſſions he could not give a vent to. Maria and Rigby were not leſs agitated; the dying lady alone preſerved an heroic compoſure. At length her huſband found his ſpeech: he threw himſelf on the bed by her, he preſſed her to his throbbing heart in an extacy of grief— "So
" may the Almighty forgive me in the day
" of judgement, ſo may his mercy ſpare
" me in the hour of his wrath, as I pardon
" and forgive thee, my beſt Maria, thou
" virtuous partner of my afflicted heart.—
" But yet live; live, that I may make
" thee

"thee ample amends for the injurious ſuſ-
"picions I entertained of you."

"It muſt not be," ſaid ſhe, ſtraining him with a languid embrace to her pale lips, "I decay every moment; yet my "heart feels its exhauſted ſtrength a little "renewed by thy kindneſs. I thank thee "from my ſoul for all thy goodneſs to "me, and more particularly this laſt mark "of it: add to it, by taking care of my "other little ones, whom I have not the "happineſs of ſeeing in theſe my laſt mo-"ments. And you, my children, to "whom I have related the hiſtory of my "life, reveal it to my honoured lord; he "will reſpect the memory of her whom "he loved."

"Say no more," ſaid he, ſobbing: "you diſtreſs me beyond utterance; I am "become a child a ſecond time; this un-"exampled tenderneſs overcomes me."

"Yet weep not for me; we ſhall meet "again. Maria, my beloved daughter,

" let thy mother's fate be a warning to " thee, never to quit the paths of truth. " Let an ingenuous openneſs govern all " thy actions: then ſhall not ſhame ap- " proach thee, or fear of detection em- " bitter thy days. May the God of hea- " ven beſtow his peace upon thee, and " grant thee happineſs. Embrace me, my " children: I have no wiſh to live but " for your ſakes. Farewell, my deareſt " ſon: think of me ſometimes.—Father, " into thy hands I commend my ſpirit" was ſcarce audible: ſhe fell back in the arms of her ſon, and expired without a groan.

The attention of the wretched huſband and afflicted ſon were turned to Maria, who fell lifeleſs by her mother's ſide. They removed her into another apartment, and, with ſome difficulty, recalled her to life.

After the funeral of the dear deceaſed had been decently performed, Rigby complied

plied with his mother's deſire, and related the hiſtory of her life to Mr. Leeſon, as it had been imparted to him. When he had finiſhed this narrative, Mr. Leeſon joined afreſh with him in lamenting his mother, whom he now reſpected more than ever. He aſſured him that he ſhared his regard and affection with his own children, giving him, at the ſame time, very lively marks of his eſteem.

Rigby declared his intention of departing from him the day after his mother's interment, as his buſineſs called him away, and he could not bear to ſtay in the houſe. As he was going to Hillaſton's, he aſked leave to take Maria with him, as change of place might diſſipate her grief, which, it was feared, would affect her too much. Maria was perſuaded to accompany her brother, and the next day they ſet out together.

BOOK XII.

THE ſudden appearance of Rigby at Mrs. Hillaſton's, accompanied by Maria, occaſioned great ſurprize, not on account of his return, for they expected him daily, and were uneaſy at his long ſtay; but to ſee him come muffled up, ſo much changed, ſo pale and dejected, and with Miſs Leeſon, in whoſe face they could delineate ſorrow, cauſed univerſal conſternation. Hillaſton happened to be at home when their chaiſe ſtop'd in the yard. He was firſt to hand them out: but he drew back with aſtoniſhment, when he beheld his friend's countenance.

"Good God! Rigby, what ails you? "I am ſorry to ſee you thus."

"Ah, Hillaſton, I am bad enough in- "deed."

They aſſiſted Maria, who was received with great friendſhip by the ladies; and Rigby,

Rigby, in the mean time, informed Hillaſton of what had paſſed ſince he ſaw him: who endeavoured to conſole his griefs, and ſympathized with him. His mother teſtified great marks of affection for Rigby; and the joy the family felt at the happy reſtoration of Hillaſton, was damped by the ſight of the affliction that their viſitors laboured under. Rigby could not forbear diſcloſing his uneaſineſs to Hillaſton, at not having been able to return to Berkſhire within the limited time. — "But to-"morrow," ſaid he, "I will go; my poor "Lydia thinks I have forſaken her. I am "very unhappy about her, as I have had "no anſwers to my letters. The reluc-"tance ſhe expreſſed at parting with me "comes freſh into my remembrance, and "I begin to think ſomething unfortunate "attends me: I know not what it is, but "I have very unuſual fears."

His friend wiſhed to diſengage him from ſuch thoughts, which, he told him, were

were only the conſequences of his weakneſs, and the extraordinary agitations he had lately undergone. He alſo promiſed to go along with him. This was very pleaſing to him, and every thing was prepared for their departure the next morning: but a fever ſeized Rigby in the night, and he was ſo very ill the next day, that there was no poſſibility of his ſtirring. The whole family were intereſted in his welfare: and their care and attention to him ſhewed the earneſtneſs of their wiſhes for his recovery. It was ten days before his diſorder left him: and it was not judged prudent for him to venture on a journey for a week after he was able to walk about. This gave him great uneaſineſs; for he was very anxious to return to Berkſhire. And what encreaſed his anxiety was, that there was no anſwer made to his letter which he wrote to Miſs Bennet, informing her of the cauſe of this delay, and where he was. This ſtate of uncertainty was intolerable: and, in ſpite

of

of every remonſtrance to the contrary, he ſet out, though far from being re-eſtabliſhed in health, accompanied by his friend. They arrived without any accident at Wilkins's: and the journey ſeemed to have been of ſervice to Rigby, who mended greatly as he approached the place where he ſuppoſed Lydia was.

The length of time he had been abſent had ſo far exceeded his intended return, that the Farmer's family were all uneaſy about him, and were glad to ſee him come back, though ſo ill. He failed not to aſk, the moment of his arrival, if they had heard any thing of Mrs. Wilcox, or Miſs Bennet. Mrs. Wilkins quitted the room: the Farmer looked wiſtfully at him, ſhook his head, and remained ſilent.

"Why do not you ſpeak?" ſaid he — "that ſilence prognoſticates ſome-"thing dreadful. I have juſt ſeen my "mother die, and am acquainted with "woe.

"woe. I can bear misfortune: let me
"know the worſt that attends me."

"Indeed, Mr. Rigby, you ſhould be
"prepared."

"I ſuppoſe," ſaid he haſtily, "ſhe is
"dead too. Is it ſo?"

"It is but too true."

"Thy will be done—I ſubmit. But I
"ſhould have been formed of other mate-
"rials, to endure this weight of afflic-
"tion. Surely I cannot ſupport it."

He left the room abruptly, and retiring to his own chamber, threw himſelf on the bed in a fit of deſpair. Words cannot paint his diſtreſs, or the agonies he at that moment experienced. Hillaſton feared that this news would make him relapſe, and acquainted Wilkins with every thing that had happened.

When the firſt tranſports of the afflicted Rigby's grief were a little abated, Hillaſton went up to him. He found him in-

inſenſible to every thing but the thoughts of his beloved Lydia.

"Miſery is our lot in a greater or leſſer "degree," ſaid Hillaſton: "it is dealt out "to us in larger or ſmaller portions; thine "is heavy to bear, and requires the more "fortitude. I confeſs you have reaſon to "grieve. I lament her loſs, for ſhe was "worthy to be lamented."

"She was, indeed. Ah, Hillaſton, "you knew not the virtues of her ſoul, "her purity, her fondneſs. Her perſon "was not more lovely, and it was truly "ſo, than her mind was charming. Where "ever ſhall I find ſuch perfections joined "in one woman again? Is not my fate "very hard? Scarcely had I won her to "my wiſh, and began to form plans of "happineſs with her in future life, than "ſhe is ſnatched away from me; and I am "left miſerable, and excluded from every "comfort. Never ſhall my heart know "love more; never ſhall my boſom har-

"bour

" bour affection for any other woman.
" Hear this reſolution, thou pure ſaint,
" whoſe gentle ſpirit, perhaps at this mo-
" ment, hovers over thy afflicted lover,
" and ſees with ſatisfaction the grief that
" thy loſs has occaſioned, and hears with
" pleaſure the vow he now makes. Short
" will be my days, and ſoon ſhall I follow
" thee to the cold grave."

Hillaſton was pierced to the heart at his friend's diſtreſs: every argument he could uſe was unavailing, and he refuſed to be comforted. He rejected all manner of ſuſtenance for that day, nor would he leave his room. The only amuſement he coveted was to have an undiſturbed indulgence to reflect on his Lydia, to weep over her loſs, and lament his own miſery. The ſecond day he perſevered in his reſolution. Hillaſton entreated him to come down among the family, and to take ſome nouriſhment.

" I have

"I have no occaſion for food," ſaid he: "I am full: my woe leaves no room "for any thing elſe: I drink from the "bitter cup of adverſity, and ſorrow is "my companion. Leave me to myſelf, "Hillaſton."

"That I will not do. From being af-"flicted myſelf, I become the comforter: "and ſhall I refuſe to adminiſter the ſame "conſolation to you which you ſo kindly "afforded to me?"

He undertook to combat all his arguments, and, with much difficulty, he prevailed on him to go down ſtairs with him. However, he would not ſtay long with them, but gave looſe in ſolitude to his grief, which preyed on his heart, and almoſt ſhook his reaſon from her ſeat. While he thus indulged his unavailing ſorrow, Hillaſton felt the eſteem he ever had for Hannah Wilkins ſoften into a tenderer paſſion. He beheld her with more pleaſure than formerly: he ſought her company, and

and was uneaſy at her abſence. Though he was not unacquainted with her humanity, and the tenderneſs of her diſpoſition, it encreaſed his good opinion of her, when he beheld the concern ſhe expreſſed, and really felt, for Rigby's grief, and the occaſion of it. He had hinted in his parting with her, that he had ſomething material to communicate to her: now was the time. He began to find that ſhe was eſſentially neceſſary to his happineſs, and wiſhed to learn how ſhe ſtood affected to him. He ſeized the firſt opportunity that offered when ſhe was alone, and they had a probability of enjoying their converſation undiſturbed.

"Poor Mr. Rigby," ſaid ſhe, "how "ſorry am I for him! He is a conſtant "lover indeed."

"He is ſo, and I ſincerely pity his ſitu-"ation; but I think it is preferable to that "of him who loves without return."

That

That was touching to Hannah: ſhe felt the force of it, her blood mounted into her cheeks.

"My dear Hannah," continued he, "I "told you when laſt I ſaw you, that I had "ſomething particular to ſay to you: I "hope it will not be diſpleaſing to you."

Poor Hannah's uneaſineſs began to encreaſe; ſhe durſt not look at him, or ſpeak; her confuſion was very viſible.

"It is a circumſtance, I aſſure you, that "my future happineſs in a great meaſure "depends upon. I love you, Hannah; "your many good qualities have created a "ſtrong and laſting paſſion in my heart; I "hope to inſpire you with the ſame: my "affection is honourable, and I wiſh to "ſanctify it by the moſt holy and binding "ties. I am a ſtranger to compliments or "falſehood: if you will unite your fate to "mine, I will endeavour to make your "life paſs as happily as I can."

He

He pauſed, but the trembling Hannah could not anſwer him.

"My deareſt girl," ſaid he, "I ſpeak "with the greateſt truth and ſincerity; I "long eſteemed you; even in the hours of "my frenzy I regarded you. It is not "difficult to change friendſhip into love: "that I have experienced. Tell me then, "Hannah, whether I am diſagreeable to "you, or whether your heart is engaged "to any other perſon: in either caſe I will "deſiſt from teizing you with my addreſſes. "Speak then, as well for my ſake as your "own."

"How can I ſpeak, Sir?" ſaid ſhe, with a faultering voice. "What can I ſay to "you? Or how ſhall I believe that a gen-"tleman of family, of fortune, and your "ſituation in life, can think ſeriouſly of a "poor Farmer's daughter, without fortune, "or any other recommendation than her "honeſty?"

"I have

"I have told you nothing, my lovely "girl," replied he, taking her tremulous hand in his, "that you may not believe. "The moſt ungenerous thing a man can "do, is to endeavour to prepoſſeſs a wo- "man with an opinion that he is fond of "her, with an intention to deceive her. "Such proceedings my heart is a ſtranger "to, and my tongue does not belie it. "I have offered the moſt convincing proof "of my affection: conſent to become my "wife: I want no fortune; and it is more "pleaſure for me to beſtow it upon you, "than to receive it at your hands. I have "no conception of your father's making "objections: it only remains then with "you, my charming girl, to reward my "paſſion, and crown it with joy, by be- "ſtowing your hand on me, by believing "my truth, my ſincerity, and my love."

"Oh! we are but too apt to believe "what we wiſh."

"And am I ſo happy," ſaid he, claſping the unreluctant maid to his boſom, "as to find it your wiſh. My lovely "Hannah, from this hour I will make it "my ſtudy to repay your kindneſs, your "openneſs and generoſity, in letting me "know my fate at once, and not keeping "me in ſuſpence and torment."

Her reply was dictated by modeſty and good ſenſe, which ſtill rendered her more dear to him. He produced the written fragment he had found, and aſked her if it was her hand. She confeſſed it was, with a bluſh, and requeſted of him to return it.

"No," ſaid he, "I will preſerve it whilſt "I live; this ſhall be the teſtimonial of "your regard for me: this ſhall be my "remembrance that my deareſt Hannah "thought well of me, even when I was "not myſelf: and I have no greater rea"ſon to thank heaven for the reſtoration "of my ſenſes, than as it has given me an

"op-

"opportunity of repaying, in ſome mea-
"ſure, your kindneſs and compaſſion to
"me."

Hannah, though ſhe could have liſtened to him *from morn till dewy eve, a ſummer's day*, yet was glad when they were interrupted. Her heart was overcharged, and ſhe longed to give it vent. Her tears, which fell plentifully in private, calmed her tranſports, and moderated her joy, which was exceſſive. Rigby, though his grief was not at all abated, yet, in compliance to the deſire of his friend, once more mixed with the family. He aſked the Farmer if he knew where Miſs Bennet was buried; who replied, he had heard that ſhe died in London, but where ſhe was interred he knew not.

"No doubt Mrs. Wilcox can inform
"you," ſaid Hillaſton; "and I think you
"ſhould go and ſee her."

"It is my intention," replied he: "but
"how ſhall I ſupport an interview with

"her? How ſhall I again behold thoſe
"places where I have been ſo happy with
"Lydia? It will be death to me; never-
"theleſs I will go to her."

The next day he put this reſolution in practice; but every ſtep he took towards the ſpot where he had been bleſſed with Lydia, encreaſed his ſorrow. His eyes poured forth tears, his burſting heart was ſwollen with woe: he at laſt reached Mrs. Wilcox's houſe. The appearance of Rigby ſurprized the ſervant that opened the door. On his enquiring for her miſtreſs, he was informed that ſhe had juſt recovered from her lying-in, and was but indifferent. He ſent her up, to notify his being there; and Mrs. Wilcox deſired him to walk up. He obeyed, and found her very weak and ill. When ſhe ſaw him ſhe could not ſpeak, but burſt into tears. Rigby's eyes overflowed ſympathetically.

"I ſhould apologize to you, Mr. Rigby,
"for bringing you into a ſick chamber."

"I am

"I am very ſorry for the occaſion of it, "madam. May you live long and happi-"ly; but your poor couſin—ſhe is no "more."

"Alas, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "I fear it is but "too true. I thought the news would have "killed me, it was ſo ſudden and ſhocking. "I have not recovered it yet, and I fear "never ſhall; the dear the worthy girl!"

"Pray, madam," ſaid Rigby, "where "did ſhe die, and of what diſorder, and "where was ſhe buried?"

"Theſe are particulars I can hardly in-"form you of, with any certainty. Soon "after you went away, Mr. Wilcox "came down in a great hurry, and told "Lydia, that her affairs required her im-"mediate preſence in London, as there "was ſome large ſums of money in a per-"ſon's hands, who was going to fail, as "it was apprehended, and that it was ab-"ſolutely neceſſary ſhe ſhould go up to "London, with him, and that they muſt

" depart the next morning. She ſeemed " very unwilling to go, but was at laſt pre- " vailed upon, and went away. I was " then very big with child, and expected " every moment to cry out, or elſe I ſhould " have accompanied her. They were away " above a month, before I heard any thing " of them: and what gave me great un- " eaſineſs, was, that Lydia never wrote to " me. Mr. Wilcox came home without " her; my month had not then expired. " I enquired after the dear girl. His an- " ſwers alarmed and inflamed my curioſity.

" What is the reaſon that Lydia did not " return with you?" ſaid I.

" She is dead and buried," replied he.

" I fainted away, and he left the room " before I had recovered my ſenſes. I ſaw " him again only when he came to take " leave of me. I enquired of what diſor- " der ſhe had died. He told me of a fe- " ver, which ſhe got coming out of the " play-houſe, and was buried in London.

" This

"This is all the ſatisfaction I have been "able to get from him about it. I have "not ſeen him ſince he came down to take "poſſeſſion of the eſtate, upon her death."

Theſe laſt words ſtruck Rigby very forcibly; the converſation he had with Lydia recurred to his remembrance, and the prophetic tears which the lovely girl expreſſed at his going away, all conſpired to make him think there was ſomething more extraordinary in her ſudden deceaſe, than he could fathom at once. He pauſed,—the more he conſidered, the greater reaſon he had to ſuppoſe that Wilcox, with the hope of inheriting her eſtate, had accelerated her death. He reſolved from that moment, to be ſatisfied in the truth of the whole tranſaction.

"It is odd, madam," ſaid he, "that "ſhe ſhould be buried in ſo private a "manner, and ſo ſecretly: I think ſhe "ſhould have been brought down here, "and depoſited by her father."

"Indeed I think ſo too, Mr. Rigby: "but Mr. Wilcox does every thing as he "p eaſes, and is ſo ſeldom at home with "me, that I fear I have loſt his affection "entirely. Indeed I once did imagine he "loved me, but I have ceaſed to think ſo "lately. His treatment makes me very "unhappy.

Rigby ſaid every thing he could upon ſuch an occaſion, and joined with her in lamenting her huſband's behaviour. In this converſation, which laſted a good while, he endeavoured to learn every particular concerning the time of her death, as far as Mrs. Wilcox knew. She ſatisfied him as well as ſhe could. He left her with aſſurances of regard for her, and added, that he would ſometimes come and mingle his tears with her's, for the loſs they had mutually ſuſtained. As he went home, he employed himſelf in recollecting the paſſages which gave riſe to thoſe ſuſpicions he entertained of Wilcox; and, after ſome little

little debate in his own breaſt, laid it down for a certain truth, that ſhe had been made away with for the ſake of her fortune. This being eſtabliſhed, he determined to ſearch into the bottom of this affair, and if it was ſo, to bring him to puniſhment.

Occupied with theſe thoughts, the deſire of vengeance took place of grief for a ſhort time. He haſtened home to communicate his notions to Hillaſton, who, during his abſence, had been employed in his own affairs. Wilkins walked towards his fields accompanied by Hillaſton, who took an opportunity of talking to him concerning the marriage, and ſettlement of his family. The farmer expreſſed his deſire of having them well ſettled, and eſpecially Hannah. "The poor girl," ſaid he, "has been very ill for ſome time paſt, and "we cannot find out what is the matter; "a good huſband would be the beſt reme-"dy, I believe for her; but ſhe is a very

" good girl, though I ſay it, who am her
" father."

" I ſee no reaſon why you ſhould be de-
" barred from praiſing your own child,
" when ſhe deſerves it. Indeed, farmer,
" I think your daughter a very worthy,
" good girl, and would make an excellent
" wife. And I have a young fellow in my
" eye, that I can venture to recommend to
" her, with your conſent."

" Why I believe Mr. Hillaſton, from
" what you have already done for the girl,
" that you wiſh her very well, and have a
" great friendſhip for her. And one might
" take a man that you would recommend.
" But I ſhould be glad to know who it is."

" What do you think of me for a ſon-
" in-law?"

" Ah," replied Wilkins, ſmiling, " now
" you jeer me."

" Not I in truth," anſwered Hillaſton;
" I am as much in earneſt as ever I was in
" my life, and as ſerious."

" You

"You will pardon me if I can hardly "believe you, Sir; for I cannot think you "would marry a girl who has neither for- "tune or family to boaſt of, and who is "ſo much beneath you in life; and I hope "you do not, nay, I am ſure you cannot "mean any thing elſe than honourably by "her."

"I aſſure you I do not; and my ſole in- "tention is to make her my wife, if you "have no objection. As for her conſent, "I am pretty ſecure of that. I love your "daughter, Mr. Wilkins; ſhe is not averſe, "and I thought it neceſſary to conſult you "about it."

"Sir," ſaid the farmer, "for my part I "receive your propoſal with joy, and am "ſenſible of the honor you intend both me "and my daughter; and I hope her conduct "will ever be ſuch, as will give you no oc- "caſion to repent your raiſing her from this "humble ſtation."

Hillaſton replied, he was ſure it would not, and deſiring him to communicate the matter to his wife, left him, to return to Hannah, whom he ſuppoſed to be uneaſy to know the reſult of this application to her father, which he had told her it was his deſign to make.

She was extremely happy in his approbation, and the lover began to talk of fixing the time of their union.

Rigby returned home, and Hillaſton perceived the glow of anger on his cheek. He had ſcarcely patience to finiſh his dinner, or rather wait the finiſhing their meal, for he eat very little himſelf, before he called his friend out, and informed him of the ſuſpicions he had conceived, and the grounds and cauſes of them, at the ſame time acquainting him with his intention of proceeding to London, to inveſtigate this matter. Hillaſton owned that the doubts he entertained, were not void of probability.

"Ah,

"Ah, Hillaſton," ſaid Rigby, "that "journey to Cambridgeſhire has ruin'd "me. The dear girl parted with me as if "ſhe knew we were never to meet again. "The melancholy and fatal accident that "befel me there, and which detained me "ſo long—all, all conſpired to my de- "ſtruction.—I ſhall never know peace or "happineſs more!"

"Fear not, Rigby, it will yet return to "you."

"But I will find him out who has been "the cauſe of robbing me of it: and if he "has been guilty,—no ſubterfuge, no eva- "ſion ſhall ſcreen him from public juſtice, "or my private revenge."

"He merits puniſhment if he has done "this. But in your trouble I truſt it will "be a ſatisfaction to you to know that I "have a proſpect of happineſs far beyond "my wiſhes."

A look from Rigby expreſſed curioſity and ſurpriſe, mixed with pleaſure.

Hillaſton

Hillaſton continued—"Yes, my friend, "in the virtuous ſimplicity, in the unaf- "fected tenderneſs of Hannah Wilkins, I "ſhall find a repoſe and pleaſure hitherto "unknown to me. She has met my paſ- "ſion, and her friends have conſented to "our union."

"I do rejoice, ſincerely rejoice, at your "happineſs; convinced that Hannah's "fondneſs for you will ever be a ſource of "delight. May you be bleſs'd. May no "foul accident intervene to interrupt your "joy. I will ſet off for London to-morrow, "and endeavour to find out Wilcox, and "wreſt the fatal ſecret from him, on which "my peace depends. I will never ceaſe to "purſue that villain till my doubts are ſa- "tisfied, and my ſuſpicions cleared up.— "Leave me to miſery—I am not a compa- "nion for the happy."

"I will not leave you, Rigby, I will be "the aſſociate of your toils; nor will I

"quit

" quit your ſide till peace is reſtored to your " diſtracted boſom."

" Make not ſuch a reſolution. Happi- " neſs awaits you—it courts your accept- " ance. Do not with a rude and ungentle " hand ſpurn it from you. Short are our " hours of pleaſure, many and tedious are " our days of woe. While you can enjoy " the proffer'd bleſſing, and at the laſt have " conſolation to think that you are happy, " while I am the ſport of adverſe fortune."

" I can receive no happineſs, Rigby, un- " leſs you be at reſt. The friendſhip I " have conceived for you, will not ſuffer " me to be eaſy while you are wretched. " I declare to you that I will poſitively go " along with you."

Rigby endeavoured to make him alter that reſolution, which he combated with every argument he was maſter of, but all in vain; he ſtill maintained it, and went to tell Hannah of his intended departure. 'Tis true, ſhe regarded Rigby; but ſhe loved

loved Hillaſton, and his account of thus going away ſo ſuddenly, gave her a great deal of uneaſineſs; but ſhe was obliged to ſubmit, and the next morning the two friends ſet off together for London. Rigby had paſſed through the great city two or three times, and was not an entire ſtranger to it, or its cuſtoms; but the ſearch he was now going to make, would be attended with much difficulty, and require a thorough knowledge of it. In every probable place to meet Wilcox did Rigby ſearch, and continued it for a week without any ſort of ſucceſs. In the mean time it appeared to him very neceſſary to write to Mrs. Parkington, and inform her of his mother's death. The old Lady's anſwer to this letter, was a deſire that he would come and ſee her. This Hillaſton perſuaded him to do, as he ought not to loſe the ground he had already gained in her eſteem, by any apparent neglect, when his intereſt was ſo much at ſtake.

He

He promiſed, in the mean time, to remain in London, and ſtill do every thing in his power to find out Wilcox, and relieve his mind from the doubts and ſuſpicions he then entertained, which would not ſuffer him to reſt. Rigby yielded to his friend's arguments, and ſet out for Warwickſhire.

On his arrival at his aunt's, ſhe was much pleaſed with his prompt obedience to her requeſt, yet was nevertheleſs ſhocked at his melancholy, which ſhe could not diſſipate, and which ſhe had not perceived when he had viſited her before. The kind and affectionate manner in which ſhe treated him, induced him to open his heart to her; and he informed her of the cauſe of that melancholy which ſhe had noticed ſo much. The old Lady was affected at the ſtory, and ſympathiſed with him. She was greatly pleaſed at the confidence he repoſed in her, and ſhe now liked him better than ever. He, on the other hand, could not help looking on her with reſpect, who ſo humanely

manely lamented his ſituation, and pitied him ſo kindly. She inſiſted on his ſtaying a week with her. Every place was equally indifferent to him, and he conſented. On the fifth day the poſt had brought him the following letter:

THIS day, my dear Rigby, I have ſucceeded beyond my expectations in diſcovering Wilcox. Sauntering through Piccadilly, a chariot, of a particular make, caught my eye, but the face of the gentleman who was in it ſtruck me more than the carriage. It paſſed rather ſwiftly by me; yet I nevertheleſs thought it was Wilcox's face I had ſeen, and I turned about and followed it. With him was a lady in a riding dreſs, but I could not take very exact notice of her. I purſued the chariot till it ſtopped at a handſome houſe in a genteel ſtreet, near one of the ſquares; and I could perceive, by the behaviour of the ſervants, that the gentleman in the chariot

chariot was the maſter of the houſe, and that it could be no other than Wilcox. When matters were a little compoſed, I knocked at the door, and aſked who lived there.

"Mr. Ramſden, Sir."

"Is he in town?"

"Yes, Sir, he is but juſt come."

"I want to ſpeak to him."

"He is not at home, Sir."

"Why, I ſaw him quit his chariot, and "go in. Will you pretend to tell me he "is abroad?"

"He is, indeed, Sir—he is really gone "out."

I found, at this rate, that I ſhould have no chance of enjoying an interview with him, which I was reſolved upon. I knew he was in the houſe, and ſee him I would. I therefore ſeized the fellow by the collar, and began to drub him.—"You dog," ſaid I, "you ſhould be taught to tell truth, "and I will be thy ſchoolmaſter." He roar'd

roar'd out murder, robbery, and thieves, with great vociferation. The houſe was alarmed. One of his fellow-ſervants came to his aſſiſtance, and I tripped up his heels without quitting my original hold, for to tell the truth, he made a charming noiſe. This event anſwered my expectation. All the family came running into the hall to enquire the cauſe of the uproar, and among the reſt, Wilcox himſelf. "Ha," ſaid I, letting the ſervant go, and approaching him, "I thought I ſhould be "happy enough to ſee you at laſt."

"What is the meaning of this inſo-"lence?" ſaid he with a fierce air. "Why "have you aſſaulted my ſervants in my "houſe?"

"Becauſe they would not tell the truth; "they denied your being at home. I had "ſeen you myſelf enter theſe doors but a "few minutes before, and as I had ſome "earneſt buſineſs with you, Sir, which I "muſt ſettle with you now, as I cannot

"call

"call again, I thought this would be the "moſt likely method of getting acceſs to "you, and have ſucceeded to my wiſhes."

"You are miſtaken, Sir, if you imagine "this aſſurance will recommend you.—But "what is your buſineſs with me?"

"I muſt deliver it in private."

"I know not whether I am ſafe with "you alone."

"Fear nothing from me—let your ſer-"vants take care if I ſhould attempt to "eſcape them, or offer any violence to "you."—He retired into an adjoining parlour with me. "I am firſt, Sir, to congra-"tulate you on ſucceeding ſo happily to "your couſin's eſtate; and, in the next "place, to know of what diſorder ſhe "died, and where ſhe was buried."

"Theſe queſtions can be very ſoon an-"ſwered," replied he: "ſhe died of a fe-"ver, occaſioned by her catching cold "coming out of the playhouſe, and ſhe is

" buried in St. John's—Have you any thing " more to demand?"

" Not at preſent—you ſhall ſee me again." No more words paſſed, he turned upon his heel, and I left the houſe. I haſtened to the place where I was directed, and there ſaw the melancholy regiſter of her interment. I fear, my dear Rigby, that it is but too true. However, I would have you come up to town as ſoon as poſſible, that you may have an opportunity of ſeeing Wilcox, who will, no doubt, uſe every means to avoid coming to an explanation with you. Thus much for my attention to your affairs. Now for a little of my own. You recollect that when I made my will, which was depoſited in your hands, I requeſted you to accept of three thouſand pounds, as a mark of my regard for you, and a ſmall compenſation for the trouble you had been at upon my account. My recovery made the will void as to your immediately receiving that legacy: but as

it

it was my intention to afford you ſome token of my friendſhip, I muſt now inſiſt upon your accepting that ſum from my hands. It will be no ſort of prejudice to my affairs, and it will be giving you an independance. I have got you now at a proper diſtance, and can communicate this reſolution to you without fear of being contradicted or oppoſed, at leaſt for a while. But this I can tell you beforehand, that none of your delicate ſcruples, or generous arguments will have any weight with me, for I am determined to pleaſe myſelf in this matter. Farewell, Rigby; and if you can, with any convenience, leave your aunt, haſten to town to thine,

ſincerely,

RICHARD HILLASTON.

Rigby's heart was greatly agitated at the peruſal of this letter. It glowed with reſentment againſt Wilcox, and was melted with gratitude at Hillaſton's generoſity. His

His aunt obſerved his emotions, and deſired to know the cauſe of them. He could not explain them better than by giving her the letter to read. She admired his friend's behaviour: —"But," ſaid ſhe, "I would not have you indebted to any "body's bounty for an independence, my "dear boy; it ſhall be my care to ſecure "you that, whether I live or die. Never-"theleſs, I am very glad to find you have "ſo good a friend, but deſire you may re-"ject this offer; for though his good-"nature and regard may induce him to "make you this preſent, yet I had much "rather be the founder of your future for-"tune myſelf."

She got up, and, with her maid's aſſiſtance, went to her own chamber, and ſoon returned again to her nephew.

"I am very ſorry," ſaid ſhe, "for the "loſs you have ſuſtained in Miſs Bennet, "and I would be the firſt to adviſe you "to ſee whether there was any foul play

"uſed

"uſed towards her: but as that may be "expenſive to you, and I would not have "you troubleſome to your friend, or de- "pendent on him, take theſe notes: theſe "two hundred pounds will laſt you for "ſome time; but I would have you ſpare "no pains to find out whether there is "really any truth in your ſuſpicions. Stay "with me to-day, and to-morrow ſet out "for London."

Rigby returned her thanks, in the moſt grateful manner, for her goodneſs; and ſhe aſſured him, with great affection, that ſhe regarded his intereſt as her own; deſiring him to write to her frequently, and inform her of his ſucceſs. He travelled poſt to London, and arrived there the next night. He found his friend at home, and informed him of the reception he had met with from his aunt; and concluded with aſſuring him he could not accept of his proffered kindneſs. Hillaſton told him it was in vain to remonſtrate concerning that mat-

ter, for he had reſolved upon it; and that only by his acceptance of it would he be induced to continue his friendſhip for him, which he would ſtifle for ever if he refuſed. Rigby could not quarrel and break with him for having ſo great a regard to his intereſt, and at laſt he conſented, but reſolved to keep this matter ſecret from his aunt, in whoſe good opinion the knowledge of this tranſaction might prejudice him: and reſolving alſo to take the firſt opportunity which might preſent itſelf of making him a ſuitable return.

When this important point was adjuſted, they entered into a conſultation in what manner to proceed with regard to Wilcox, and ſettled a plan to be executed the next morning. They roſe very early, and Hillaſton conducted his friend to Wilcox's houſe; but, to their great ſurprize, it was all ſhut up and abandoned. They made enquiries at the neighbouring houſes concerning this extraordinary appearance, and they

they learned that Mr. Ramſden had decamped entirely, with his family, two days before that; and having left no marks whereby he could be traced, was not to be found. This was a grievous diſappointment to poor Rigby, who had promiſed himſelf great ſatisfaction and information from an interview with him.

"My ſuſpicions are now more ſtrong "than ever," ſaid he: "the villain ſhuns "me. It is the province of guilt to be "fearful: conſcious iniquity makes him "fly me. Good heaven! ſhall not puniſh-"ment attend him? Shall he not meet "the reward of his crimes?"

From hence they proceeded to the church, and there found the regiſter of the burial; and, by dint of enquiries, learned where the perſon there interred was brought from. They went to the houſe which the undertaker directed them to who had buried her, but they could not receive the information there they wanted; for the then inhabitants

of the houſe had dwelt there only a fortnight, nor did they know who lived there before. All that could be gathered from their moſt diligent enquiries for a whole week, which they ſpent in making them, was, that this Lydia Bennet was a young lady, very handſome, and died after a few days illneſs: that ſhe was buried by a very near relation, who would have a very good fortune by her death; and that there was a very pompous funeral.

Tired and diſſatisfied with theſe informations, which did not tend in the leaſt to remove his ſuſpicions, or reſolve his doubts, but, on the contrary, encreaſed both, by the air of the myſtery he perceived the whole matter to have been conducted with, ſat down to conſult with his friend what courſe to take. They concluded that Wilcox would be on his guard, if he ſuppoſed them to be in London, which they were ſure he had not left, as he could there more effectually ſecure himſelf from their enquiries, and re-

main concealed, than in any other place. To gather every information of his proceeding, he wrote down to Wilkins, to know if he was in the country; and he was anſwered that he was not, nor had been there ſince he himſelf left it; nor did Mrs. Wilcox know any thing of him.

This diſtracted Rigby; and, among the many ſchemes that ſuggeſted themſelves to the friends, they thought, by going abroad for a little while, and contriving to make their being out of the kingdom very public, it might draw him from his concealment, and enable them at laſt to catch him. This appeared very plauſible, and they reſolved to put it in execution: but Rigby again perſuaded his friend to leave him, enjoy the happineſs that was prepared for him, and let him wander by himſelf. A friendly conteſt enſued, in which Hillaſton prevailed, and they reſolved to ſet off for the Continent as ſoon as poſſible. They were ready in a few days; and making their

deſign as public as they well could, proceeded to Dover; and, as it was equally indifferent to them to what part of the world they went, embarked aboard a veſſel bound for Dunkirk, attended by an old ſervant of Hillaſton's, on whoſe fidelity and care they could depend. Rigby left England without regret: yet he could not be abſolutely convinced of his Lydia's death. Some unaccountable prepoſſeſſion had ſeized him, and he frequently told his friend that his heart often whiſpered him that ſhe was not dead. This notion, which had not the moſt diſtant glimpſe of probability, his friend endeavoured to deſtroy in him; for he thought that keeping ſuch an unreaſonable hope alive would only ſerve to torment him ſo much longer; when the poſitive certainty of her not exiſting would ſooner wear off, and be cured, than if he indulged thoſe deluſive and imaginary infatuations. Many converſations did they hold

hold together on this ſubject in their paſſage, as well as when they landed.

As they reſolved to ſtay abroad three weeks or a month, they propoſed viſiting ſuch parts of Flanders in the vicinity of England, as ſhould be conſiſtent with their intended plan. They deſigned to ſee Ghent, Antwerp, and Bruſſels, which would take them up as much time as they could well ſpare. Change of place, or variety of objects, had no effect upon Rigby; his melancholy was not to be ſo eaſily removed; and it was the more dreadful, as it was fixed and permanent. His grief was as lively as ever, and he really knew no reſpite from it; though he always paid that compliment to his friend's endeavours to pleaſe him, as to appear amuſed and diverted: but when in private, he gave a looſe to thoſe ſorrows which he had been hoarding up, and whoſe force was ſo much the greater, in proportion as they had been confined. Hillaſton ſaw with a

great deal of uneaſineſs the change in his health, and the alteration in his appearance: he found that he nouriſhed his woe in ſecret, and feared that it would deſtroy him at laſt. He conſidered it, in his preſent ſituation, as doubly his duty to take care of his friend, who had met with this accident in his abſence from Lydia, when employed in his ſervice; nor was there any thing wanting on his part.

The chief reaſon of Hillaſton's perſuading him to leave England, was in hopes of diſſipating his melancholy by the difference of the objects he would continually meet with; whilſt at home, every thing conſpired to remind him of the cauſe of his grief.

As they had no buſineſs to go upon that required haſte, they took their own time, and travelled as beſt ſuited their inclination and convenience. The ſecond night after their arrival in Flanders, they lay at Staden, a ſmall town beyond Ypres. In the

the morning, before their departure, Hillaſton's ſervant informed him there was an Engliſh gentleman in the inn where they were, who was in very great diſtreſs, in want of every thing, and who had been dangerouſly ill from a wound he had received, that was hardly cured yet; and that he muſt periſh if he had not ſome aſſiſtance: that he had not ſeen him, but had learned this from the people of the houſe, to whom he was greatly in debt, and who began to be tired of ſupplying him with neceſſaries.

This account affected Hillaſton: his ears were ever open to the voice of diſtreſs: but a countryman in a ſtrange land had a double claim upon him. He deſired his ſervant to find out his chamber, and deliver his compliments to the ſick man, and acquaint him, that he would wait on him if agreeable, and pay his reſpects to him. The ſtranger, whoſe name was Chapman, heard the meſſage with rapture.

"Tell your maſter," replied he eagerly, "who has been ſo kind as to take ſuch "notice of me, that I ſhall be glad to ſee "him before I die, and thank him for his "humane intentions, which can now be "of no ſervice to me."

Hillaſton went to him directly. The apartment in which he was lodged ſpoke his circumſtances ſufficiently, without an explanation. The wind had free acceſs through the windows, and the rain deſcended through the ſhattered roof, which was all the defence he had from the weather. The meanneſs of the room ſtruck Hillaſton; but the appearance of the meagre pallid wretch who ſpoke to him, melted his heart with pity.

"It is kind of you, Sir, to be thus cha-"ritable: it is a pleaſure to my broken ſpi-"rit, to behold the face of an Engliſhman "again."

There was ſomething in his manner that indicated his being ſuperior to the common rank

rank of people, and which intereſted Hillaſton ſtill more particularly in his behalf. He drew near the bed, and ſeated himſelf on the ſide.

"I am very ſorry indeed, Sir," ſaid he, "to ſee you ſo ill, and find you ſo badly "accommodated: but be of good cheer; "every thing that my pocket can com-"mand, you ſhall be ſupplied with: you "ſhall have immediate aſſiſtance. Do not "be caſt down, Sir: with God's help, we "will recover you."

"Ah, Sir, that hour is paſt; my weak-"neſs tells me that my end is approach-"ing: yet I fear to die. I look forward "with horror: and all the ills I have lately "ſuffered here, and they have been nu-"merous, are nothing to what I dread will "follow my departure into another world. "You know not what a wretch you offer "aſſiſtance to: one who is equally terrified "at the thoughts of dying, and who is "aſhamed to live."

"It is a dreadful ſtate indeed: yet, by "living, you may have an opportunity of "repenting, and making ſome atonement "for your crimes: therefore you ſhould "wiſh to live. Your ſelf-accuſation ſeems "to promiſe a reformation in your man-"ners, ſhould you recover."

"It is for that only I deſire to leave "this bed, which I have ſcarcely hope that "I ſhall riſe from. How willingly would "I do every thing in my power to reſtore "peace to my own heart, by doing all the "juſtice I could to thoſe I have injured. "But there are ſome whoſe wrongs exceed "retribution. Oh, Sir, I have oppreſſed "innocence, I have beguiled virtue, I have "been a ſworn foe to all goodneſs; I am "a thorough-paced villain."

"Great as your offences may have been, "yet there is an hope of pardon. Add "not deſpair to your ſins. You ſeem to "be contrite, and have a proper abhor-"rence of them."

"I

"I have," ſaid Chapman, interrupting him. "My dreadful reflections upon this "bed of death have ſufficiently convinced "me of the wickedneſs of my paſt con- "duct. The deſperate and murderous "hand of one of my aſſociates in villainy "reduced me to this ſituation. Oh Wil- "cox, Wilcox, what have you to anſwer "for! And you, much injured, lovely "maid, how ſhall I atone for——"

Hillaſton could bear it no longer: he ſtarted up in the middle of his addreſs, and interrupted him with the moſt expreſſive curioſity and ſurprize in his voice and manner — "What Wilcox? What maid? "Who are you?"

Chapman was alarmed at the eagerneſs with which he interrogated him: his conſcious horrors, added to his exceſſive weakneſs, rendered him unable to bear his agitations. He looked wiſtfully at Hillaſton, without being able to ſpeak; and then cloſed his eyes, as if to open them no more.

more. A moment's recollection ſufficed to convince Hillaſton that he had behaved with the greateſt imprudence. He thought he was gone for ever: he felt him, and found his pulſe beat: he ran with all the haſte he could make to call for aſſiſtance, which was ſoon procured for him. He ſent his ſervant up to bring him intelligence when he ſhould recover, and paſſed an hour as uneaſily as ever he did before in his life. How much did he condemn his own eagerneſs and precipitation! But ſo greatly was he ſurprized at the ſound of Wilcox's name, that he could not contain himſelf.

What a diſcovery had he loſt if this man ſhould die? for he concluded it could be no other perſon than this Wilcox whom they had been in queſt of, that this ſick man meant. He walked about his chamber in the moſt diſordered ſtate of mind, waiting his ſervant's coming to inform him of his ſituation. One thing afforded him ſatisfac-

tion,

tion, and that was, that Rigby ſlept longer than uſual that morning, and had not yet been ſtirring. At length his ſervant came and relieved him from his diſagreeable and painful uncertainty, by informing him that the ſick gentleman was reſtored to life again: and that the phyſician and ſurgeon would wait on him directly. He ſent him back with his compliments to Mr. Chapman, and deſired him to want for nothing, and only to think of his recovery; and that he would wait on him in the evening: for he feared to name a ſhorter time, leſt his appearance might have a bad effect upon him.

From the phyſician and ſurgeon he learned that his extreme weakneſs was what they had moſt to dread: that his wound was not dangerous, but would require a great deal of care to heal it thoroughly. He aſked if it was proper to move him into a more comfortable apartment: which they permitted. He then enjoined them to be careful and regular in their attend-

ance

ance on him, which they promiſed, and left him to conſider in what manner he ſhould contrive to delay Rigby till he could have a proper explanation of the words he had heard, and which he determined at all events to be ſatisfied in. Giving his ſervant a ſtrict charge not to mention a ſyllable of what had happened, or about the ſick gentleman to Mr. Rigby, he let him enjoy his repoſe: his nature, wearied out by continued ſorrow, required reſt. He ſlept very long, and it was near eleven o'clock when he awoke. When he ſaw what hour it was by his watch, he was alarmed at his ſleeping ſo long, and roſe haſtily to enquire of his friend why he had ſuffered him to loſe ſo much time.

Hillaſton congratulated him on the ſoundneſs of his reſt, that all the noiſe could not diſturb him: and on his demanding when they were to ſet out, complained of an indiſpoſition; and hinted, that if it was not diſagreeable to him, he would be glad

to

to have an opportunity of continuing where they were all day. Rigby inſiſted upon it they ſhould not ſtir: and recommending it to him to have proper advice, ſtaid conſtantly with him, adminiſtring to his fictitious illneſs with the greateſt tenderneſs and care. Hillaſton was concerned at giving him that temporary uneaſineſs which he felt for his indiſpoſition; but it was unavoidable: to communicate what he knew might have been equally dangerous to Rigby and the ſick man, from the tranſports of the former, and the languid ſtate of the latter. Till he ſhould be certain of the identity of the perſons, he reſolved to conceal it from his friend, who left him early in the evening to enjoy a repoſe he did not want.

Soon after he was fixed in his chamber, he ſtole out to viſit his invalid: as he was in a much more agreeable ſituation with regard to accomodations than before, the ſight was not ſo ſhocking. The ſick man returned him all the acknowledgements

that

that gratitude could dictate; declared he found himſelf much better, and that he had hopes of getting over this ſevere illneſs.

Hillaſton, finding him able to endure talking, entered into a converſation with him, which laſted a long while, and in which he had all his doubts and ſcruples reſolved; but which did not, nevertheleſs, ſerve to render him a bit eaſier. He aſſured Chapman, whoſe name he had now learned, that he might depend upon his friendſhip and aſſiſtance: that in a few days he ſhould bring a gentleman to ſee him, who was more intereſted than himſelf in his ſtory, and bade him prepare himſelf to ſee him, and try to recover his ſtrength in the mean time. He uſed the moſt conſoling and comfortable ſpeeches to him, to inſpire him with hope and ſpirits, and then left him. He formed his plan how he ſhould break this matter to Rigby, whoſe warmth

warmth he feared, if it ſhould be made known abruptly to him.

In the morning he declared himſelf perfectly reſtored, and deſirous to purſue their tour for Ghent. They accordingly ſet out, but were obliged to leave Hillaſton's ſervant behind them, who pretended to be very ill, but who was, in reality, only ſtationed as a ſpy, to watch Chapman. It was Hillaſton's deſign in this jaunt, which was but to laſt for three or four days, to lead Rigby into the diſcovery of this matter by the moſt gentle means; and, when he ſhould be thoroughly prepared for the recital, to bring him back again to the inn, where Chapman was.

Rigby was ſurprized when his friend, contrary to his cuſtom, inſtead of repreſſing thoſe fanciful notions he had entertained, and turning the converſation from thoſe favourite topics which he was ſo fond of indulging himſelf in, rather encouraged it, and ſeemed to coincide in opinion with him.

him. He perceived it, and demanded the reaſon of it.

"I do not know," ſaid Hillaſton, "whether it is by frequently converſing with you "on the ſubject, or from what other cauſe, "but I am inclined ſometimes to think as "you do concerning Lydia. I can hardly "imagine that Wilcox, that ſcoundrel, "would be deſperate enough to attempt "her life; yet I am of opinion that ſhe "has been very ill treated by him."

"And I will avenge her wrongs, Hilla-"ſton: if I have life I will. But where-"fore have we left the country where the "villain is? perhaps in our abſence he may "eſcape my vengeance."

"I believe we ſhall lull him into fancied "ſecurity by thus avoiding him; and we "may make our puniſhment more ſure: he "deſerves it. And ſomething tells me that "we ſhall learn more about him than we "thought of."

Theſe words ſeemed to require an explanation, and ſtill Hillaſton proceeded in the moſt cautious and regular manner: and it was the third night before they returned to Staden, and finiſhed his intelligence.

Impatient as Rigby was to hear Chapman's hiſtory, Hillaſton checked his tranſports, which were alarming, by telling him how dangerous their conſequences would be with regard to the perſon from whom they were to receive all their information. He even made him give him a ſolemn promiſe not to betray any anger or reſentment againſt Chapman, till he ſhould have finiſhed his tale.

When they alighted at the inn it was evening: and Hillaſton ſummoned his ſervant before him, who acquainted him that the ſick gentleman was much better, and ſo well recovered as to be able to ſit up. This intelligence was very agreeable to them both, and Hillaſton followed the ſervant into his room; and, after congratulating

lating him on his recovery, aſked him if he thought himſelf able to relate his ſtory to the gentleman he had formerly mentioned to him, who was very deſirous to hear it; and he himſelf had forgotten many circumſtances, as he had only given him the heads of it when they converſed together before. Chapman told him he believed he ſhould be able to go through it; and would be more particular now than before. Hillaſton left him, and returned immediately with his friend, who, after expreſſing his concern at his illneſs, ſeated himſelf on one ſide of him, and waited with the moſt anxious and tormenting impatience the unfolding this hiſtory, big with myſtery and woe to him. Hillaſton ſeated himſelf on the other ſide Chapman, who addreſſed them thus:

"Diſagreeable and mortifying as it may "be to me, to acquaint you with all the "tranſactions of my paſt life, yet grati-"tude for your unexpected and unmerit-

"ed

"ed kindneſs, compells me to it. I hope
"by a frequent reflection on my own miſ-
"deeds, and the ſhame that muſt inevita-
"bly attend me in the relation of them,
"that I ſhall look upon them with pro-
"per horror; and all I have to requeſt of
"you and this gentleman, is, that you
"will not view me in the light I deſerve
"to appear in, when you conſider that I
"am reſolved to make every amends in
"my power to thoſe I have unhappily
"injured.

"I have already informed you, Sir,
"that my name is Chapman: and the fa-
"mily I ſprung from, have great reaſon to
"be aſhamed of, and deny every connec-
"tion with me. My father died when I
"was young: and an affectionate mother,
"unhappily too fond of me, indulged me
"in every thing I could wiſh for. I have
"had no other education than that I re-
"ceived from a very good ſchool, where
"I was placed in the beginning of my
"life.

" life. I had an averſion to all kind of
" buſineſs: and having a middling perſonal
" fortune, determined to lay part of it out in
" the purchaſe of a commiſſion. This my
" mother conſented to: and it would have
" been put in execution, had not ſhe died,
" and my father's executor, who did not
" approve of my going into the army, re-
" fuſed to pay me the money, till I was
" of age, which I then wanted three
" years of.

" To this refuſal I owe my ruin. My
" mother's fondneſs had put a ſum of two
" hundred pounds in my own power. I
" quited the country, and with this money,
" which I thought could not be exhauſted,
" went up to London. Young, inexpe-
" rienced, fond of pleaſure, of a good
" figure, and rather handſome, I was a
" fit dupe for the deſigning villains that
" London abounds with. I had but a
" very few friends there, and thoſe my pe-
" tulance and extravagance ſoon diſguſted,

" and

" and they ſhook me off. I then was re-
" duced to aſſociate with thoſe acquain-
" tances, I had picked up at a faſhionable
" coffee-houſe which I frequented: they
" introduced me into company. Play was
" the ſole buſineſs of their evenings. I was
" obliged to do as they did, or be deſpiſ-
" ed. I was a novice, yet fortune favour-
" ed me: I won for ſome time. Women
" were not excluded our ſociety. I became
" the favourite of ſeveral. One beautiful
" creature I attached myſelf to: all the
" money I won, was dedicated to her. For-
" tune ceaſed to be propitious to me: in
" one night I was reduced to beggary.

" I went to my girl, and complained to
" her of my ill-luck: ſhe pretended to pity
" me, but refuſed to lend me any money,
" though I was convinced ſhe could not
" have diſſipated thoſe ſums my folly had
" laviſhed upon her. The next day ſhe
" left me for another. My pride would
" not put up with ſuch an inſult. I chal-

" lenged the man whom ſhe fled to, and he " refuſed to fight for her. I went to her. " She threw her arms about my neck, and " ſwore ſhe loved me better than ever for " my ſpirit. I had reſolution enough to " deſpiſe and ſpurn her.

" In a penſive manner did I repair, af- " ter the double diſappointment of her " love and the loſs of my money, to the " coffee-houſe. A companion of our noc- " turnal riots beheld my melancholy: he " addreſſed me,

' You were rather unfortunate, Mr. ' Chapman, laſt night; but there was a ' ſet made at you, I do not wonder you ' loſt.'

" I was not ignorant of his meaning, " and perceived I had been cheated.

' That was a circumſtance,' ſaid I, ' that ' I was unacquainted with before.'

' But it is true.' ſaid he. ' Come, do ' not be caſt down. I pity you: a good ' handſome young fellow as you are ſhould

' not

'not be loſt. I will lend you ſome money.
'I will do more: you ſhall be inſtructed
'in thoſe arts which render gaming a ſci-
'ence, and which baffle chance. Fortune
'has nothing to ſay to us.'

"I embraced his offer with many ex-
"preſſions of gratitude.

'But,' ſaid he, 'we muſt enter into an
'agreement. I cannot communicate theſe
'things to you, by which you will make
'a fortune, without ſome recompence:
'you ſhall allow me ſuch a part of your
'profits: and above all things, avoid wo-
'men, for they will ruin you.'

"The laſt part of his advice I could not
"attend to: they were my favourites, and
"women I muſt have. We entered into
"ſuch an agreement as he propoſed, and
"I became the ſlave of villany. Various
"were the ſcenes I paſſed through for near
"three years; but they were infamous,
"and the remembrance of them is dread-
"ful to me: however, my paſſion for

" women ever kept me poor; and my
" fondneſs for wine, never would ſuffer
" me to enjoy that coolneſs which is ne-
" ceſſary to a gameſter. My health as well
" as my pocket ſuffered in the amours I
" had.

" Many quarrels which I was led into,
" eſtabliſhed my reputation as a man of
" ſpirit, and I was conſidered in a reſpecta-
" ble light only by thoſe who feared me;
" for the honeſt part of mankind muſt
" have deteſted me.

" When I was at age, and received the
" fortune which my father had deſigned for
" my eſtabliſhment in life, it was but na-
" tural to ſuppoſe, that the experience I
" had at the gaming table, was the laſt
" place I ſhould return to: but ſuch was
" my infatuation, that I went with more
" eagerneſs than ever to ſeek deſtruction.

" I paid my old friend ſome money I
" owed him, and commenced on my own
" bottom; but I was ſoon reduced to my
" former ſituation, and only became a
" jackall

"jackall to lure others to be preyed upon. "How many unwary and unhappy men "have I been inſtrumental in leading to "their ruin! and in what a ſeries of villa- "nous actions have I been engaged!

"About this time my acquaintance "with Wilcox, began; he had been in- "troduced amongſt us at a club we had, "and being poſſeſſed with the ſpirit of "play, and having a good deal of mo- "ney, was a very acceptable gueſt. I "became more particularly intimate with "him, and he invited me to his houſe. "With him then lived a Mrs. Hillſ- "den; and as ſhe has a great ſhare in the "remainder of my narrative, it is proper "that I ſhould deſcribe her. She was at "this time about ſix or ſeven and thirty; "had a tolerable good face, an excellent "ſkin, a good voice, and in her perſon "had that *Embon-point*, which indicates a "fondneſs for pleaſure. Her eyes, her "actions ſhewed ſhe was devoted to it: but

"her words contradicted the ſentiments of "her heart; and virtue and honor were her "favourite topics, while her manners and "conduct belied her tongue. She was ſen-"ſible and very artful, when her paſſions "did not run away with her, which was "frequently the caſe: violent in her tem-"per, her hatred and her love knew "no controul; yet in general ſhe could "diſſemble thoſe paſſions, and even deck "her rage in ſmiles. She poſſeſſed an "entire dominion over Wilcox, whom "nevertheleſs ſhe only loved as he was "ſubſervient to her purpoſes. Variety "was the deity of her adoration, and man "was the victim: and while ſhe ſub-"mitted her body to the moſt abandoned "and unlimited proſtitution, ſhe haran-"gued on the rewards which Heaven re-"ſerved for the virtuous.

"Such ſhameful hypocriſy even offend-"ed me, who had no pretence to good-

"neſs.

"neſs. But I concealed the diſguſt it gave
"me.

"It ſeems Wilcox had got acquainted
"with her at a friend's houſe in the coun-
"try, with whom ſhe lived after ſhe ran
"away from her huſband, by whom ſhe
"had many children, upon pretence of ill
"uſage; though the truth was, ſhe was
"tired of him. She eloped with a young
"fellow who could better ſatisfy her de-
"ſires: ſhe ſoon left him for the perſon
"with whom Wilcox found her; and be-
"ing alſo weary of him, came up to Lon-
"don about two months before.

"She was extravagant in her dreſs and
"manner, and they kept a very good
"houſe. It ſeems an uncle, from whom
"Wilcox had great expectations, died a
"little before this, and left him a good
"ſum of money; and I heard alſo in their
"converſation, that he was his executor,
"and had large concerns in truſt for a
"Miſs Bennet, his couſin."

At the ſound of her name, Rigby could ſcarce contain himſelf. But Hillaſton, aware of the effect it might have upon him, watched his countenance, and gave him a look that repreſſed his emotions in ſome meaſure. Chapman proceeded without interruption.

"From theſe circumſtances, I concluded that he would be a very proper perſon to ſtick cloſe to: and in a little time I found that Mrs. Hillſden made ſome advances, which I met half way; and in ſhort, a very little intimacy was ſufficient with her to obtain every thing you could aſk.

"Voluptuous and libidinous to an exceſs, ſhe ſought every gratification of her favourite paſſion; all others were only ſubordinate. In ſome of our ſofter moments, I touched upon the ſtring of intereſt, and found ſhe was not deaf to the ſound. We agreed to divide the ſpoil of Wilcox between us: the plot was well executed,

"executed, and met with ſucceſs. She "continued to blind him by an apparent "fondneſs for his perſon, whilſt I enjoy-"ed the reality of it in private, at leaſt for "the time.

"The many loſſes that Wilcox met "with, the frequent demands ſhe made on "him, and his expenſive manner of living, "made it neceſſary for him to take up a "conſiderable ſum of Miſs Bennet's money. "This gave him ſome uneaſineſs: but we "ſoon drowned his reflections, by plung-"ing him again into the torrent which had "almoſt carried him away before. In a "ſhort time he found himſelf in ſuch a ſi-"tuation, and ſo involved, that to go "back, was worſe than to go on. How-"ever, he had great hopes of ſucceeding to "his couſin's eſtate by her death: for, as "he informed us, ſhe was naturally deli-"cate, and at that time was in ſo bad a "ſtate of health, that there was little "expectation of her recovery; for the

" phyſicians had given her over. This " conſideration uſed to be ſome comfort " to him under his misfortunes, and he " would frequently talk of this event as " near happening.

" It was uſual for him to go once in ſix " weeks or two months to ſee his wife, " whom he kept in ſolitude in Berk- " ſhire, in order to preſerve appearances. " He never ſtaid above three days there. " Once on his return from thence, we per- " ceived him much altered, and more " thoughtful and melancholly than he had " been. We ſtrove to find out the cauſe " of this change; and at laſt he informed " us that his couſin, whom he hoped and " ſuppoſed he ſhould have found dead, " was on the contrary much recovered, " and gave the moſt promiſing aſſurances " of being re-inſtated in her health again. " That diſagreeable and mortifying " as this was to him, yet it was ſtill " rendered more ſo, by the circumſtances

" which

"which attended it: for he found this cure "was occaſioned by a Mr. Rigby, who "had not only been the means of prevent-"ing his marrying her, and thereby enjoy-"ing the eſtate himſelf, but alſo was then "courting her, and from every thing he "could learn, would marry her when ſhe "was of age, which would ſoon happen; "and then the conſequence would be, that "he ſhould be obliged to account for "thoſe ſums which he had embezzled of "hers, to a large amount, and which he "was totally incapable of paying." 'Then,' added he, 'I ſhall be ruined entirely. 'Now if I could but diſappoint this match, 'it would gratify both my revenge and 'ambition.' "But how to do it, was the "queſtion."

'There will be no poſſibility of effecting 'it, if Rigby ſtays in the country. I 'have unhappily alarmed her,' ſaid he, 'by letting my paſſion get the better of 'my prudence: and I have already ex-

'perienced that hot-headed young fool's 'deſperation.'

"We entered into council, and Mrs. "Hillſden's verſatile genius was of the "greateſt ſervice to us by forming a thou- "ſand plots: but the chief of them was, "to get Miſs Bennet into our hands, as "then we thought that ſhe could be "brought more eaſily to terms.

"Wilcox had a ſpy to watch all Rigby's "motions: and from him we received an "account that he was gone away but for "a ſhort time. As his return was fixed for a "few days there was not a moment to "be loſt.

"I went down along with him: and on "pretence of urgent buſineſs, and a ſham "ſtory of a perſon who was going to break, "that had her money in his hands, ſhe was "inveigled up to town. We travelled up "in a poſt-coach; and the charming perſon, "good ſenſe, and gentle diſpoſition of the "young Lady, intereſted me greatly in her "behalf:

" behalf: but my deſign was to ruin her
" for the ſake of that villain Wilcox and
" his abandoned harlot. When we arrived
" in town, ſhe was lodged in his houſe,
" which went under another name; and
" Mrs. Hillſden appeared as the landlady
" who let lodgings. The unſuſpecting girl
" retired early to reſt, fatigued with her
" journey: and we entered into diabolical
" council on her fate below. She was now
" in our power—What was to be done?—
" Many were the ſchemes which were ſtart-
" ed, and none would anſwer our purpoſe.
" At laſt it came into Wilcox's head to
" force her to marry me, upon my giving
" him a releaſe as executor, and reſigning
" over to him above half her remaining
" fortune. This was plauſible enough, and
" it was to be put in execution on the next
" morning: I was to be repreſented to her
" as a young man of good fortune, and
" who was deeply in love with her. In the
" latter part of this aſſertion they were not

" ſo

"ſo far from truth as they were in the for-
"mer; for certain it is that I admired her
"much, and determined to abandon my
"former evil courſes, and make her as
"good an huſband as I could, in caſe our
"plan took effect; and I muſt confeſs,
"that I heartily wiſhed it might: not
"conſidering the injuſtice that would be
"done both to her and the man who had
"engaged her affections.

"I attended at the appointed hour in
"the morning at Wilcox's, to know what
"ſucceſs his firſt application to her in my
"behalf would have. I was placed in an
"adjoining cloſet, where I could hear every
"word.

"After breakfaſt was over, the tea-
"things removed, Wilcox aſked her how
"ſhe liked the gentleman that came up
"with them yeſterday. She replied, very
"well."

"I am

'I am glad you do, Lydia,' ſaid he, 'for then you will not have any averſion 'to the propoſal I am going to make you. 'He is a young gentleman of good fa-'mily and fortune, and has taken a parti-'lar fancy to you; and as you ſeem to 'approve him now, you will have no ſort 'of objection to marrying him.'

'Upon my word Mr. Wilcox I ſhall, 'and inſuperable ones.'

'Pray what are they?'

'It does not ſignify what they are, but 'they are ſuch as cannot be overcome.'

'I ſuppoſe you will not be averſe to his 'paying his addreſſes to you.'

'I ſhall, and deſire I may not ſee his 'face.'

'Pho, pho, that is all ſtuff; every 'woman likes flattery, and ſeldom cares 'whence it comes from.'

'Upon my word Mr. Wilcox you pre-'tend to judge very freely of me, but 'you are exceedingly wrong; and I deſire

'once

'once more that I may not ſee his face
'again.'

'This peremptory and extraordinary be-
'haviour is rather unuſual with you, Lydia:
'it was formerly otherwiſe. I ſuppoſe it is
'Mr. Rigby who has put theſe pretty no-
'tions into your head, and taught you to
'behave in this manner.'

'I did not come with you to London,
'Sir, to be treated thus: let us expedite
'the buſineſs we came about, and let me
'return to the country.'

'This is a very pretty ſpirit you exert
'indeed, Lydia. But I muſt now inform
'you, that it was upon this buſineſs only
'you were brought up to London, and
'which muſt be finiſhed before you go
'back again.'

'Muſt Sir! muſt!—I know that my
'poor father was ſo much impoſed upon
'by you, that he put it in your power to
'prevent my marrying till I am one and
'twenty;

'twenty; but I do not believe you can
'force me to marry whom you pleaſe.'

'What would you have, Lydia? is not
'this gentleman ſuperior to Rigby in every
'thing? He muſt be your huſband.'

'If that Rigby was here, you would
'as ſoon eat your nails as talk thus of
'him; you fear him at the moment you are
'abuſing him: but I will leave this place
'inſtantly,' ſaid ſhe, ringing the bell.

'You are greatly miſtaken, you cannot
'quit this place without my permiſſion:
'Do you think I will reſign you and your
'fortune to the man whom I ſo much de-
'teſt? no, you are in my power now, and
'ſo I will keep you.'

'Do you mean to murder me?'

'No, I have too great a regard to my-
'ſelf. I am going to have company you
'may not like, and had better retreat to
'your chamber: you muſt endure a little
'confinement.'

"She anſwered not, but retired into her "room; the door of which he locked, "and then went down ſtairs. I followed "him. The coolneſs he preſerved during "the converſation was entirely fictitious; "for his agitations were great while he "was with us. 'You have heard what has 'paſſed,' ſaid he, 'and ſmall are the hopes 'I have of bending her to my will. What 'is to be done!'

"Mrs. Hillſden adviſed him to uſe force, "but he was more inclined to gentle means: "and in this I oppoſed her alſo. I deſired "to be admitted to ſee Lydia, and try "what effect my addreſſes might have upon "her: it was thought imprudent to attack "her as yet, and in about two hours after, "I was permitted to ſee her. Wilcox pre-"pared her to receive me—I followed him "up ſtairs; and after a few minutes con-"verſation, he left us together. I ſaw "the tears trickle down her lovely cheek "as ſhe ſpoke. My heart was nettled, and

"I found

"I found my words fail me: yet ſhe was "an object deſirable and moſt amiable, "and it was my buſineſs to addreſs her."

'Madam,' ſaid I approaching her, 'Mr. 'Wilcox has informed me, that he has al- 'ready acquainted you with the cauſe of 'this viſit, which, I preſume——'

"I faultered, and heſitated as I ſpoke"

'Sir,' ſaid ſhe, interrupting me with the greateſt dignity in her manner, 'I am told 'you are a gentleman: your addreſs and 'behaviour confirm me in that opinion. 'It is true, that Mr. Wilcox has alſo told 'me you have done me the honour to think 'well of me. Greatly as I am flattered by 'your eſteem, I think it only generous and 'honeſt to inform you, that I cannot by 'any means liſten to your ſuit: my heart is 'already engaged, and my affections are 'united to a gentleman who was, unhappily 'for me, abſent when I was thus trepaned 'away. After this declaration, I do not 'preſume, Sir, that you will chuſe to throw

'away

'away your time, as it muſt be to no pur-
'poſe; and that you will uſe your endea-
'vours to extricate me from theſe difficul-
'ties, and free me from the reſtraint I am
'under upon your account, by declining to
'perſecute me any longer. I am well con-
'vinced Mr. Rigby will make you any re-
'turn in his power, and it will be the only
'means of ſecuring my eſteem.'

'Charming Lady! what would I not do
'to gain your eſteem; or venture, to pur-
'chaſe your regard? Your couſin has hinted
'to me that you thought me not diſagree-
'able; and, recommended by him, I pre-
'ſume to acquaint you with the ſincere
'and honourable paſſion my heart enter-
'tains for you.'

"She would not ſuffer me to proceed."

'I thought you were a gentleman,' ſaid
ſhe, with an air of contempt, 'I am ſorry
'I was ſo groſsly deceived in you. No-
'thing but the diſtreſs of my ſituation,
'and the hope of intereſting you in my
'behalf,

'behalf, could have made me diſcloſe the 'ſecret of my heart. Had you known the 'pain it gave me, perhaps you would have 'paid more reſpect to it: but I am ſure 'you are void of all delicacy, or even hu-'manity.'

"I began to ſpeak again, and in the "moſt ſoothing manner calm her anger "and deprecate her wrath."

'I will hear no more,' ſaid ſhe, 'and am 'ſorry that I am obliged to leave the room 'to protect myſelf from your inſults.'

"As ſhe ſpoke ſhe retired to her cham-"ber; and faſtening herſelf in, left me to "my cogitations. I ſaw her reſolution: "and the affection ſhe had conceived for "Mr. Rigby gave me but very little chance "of ſucceeding in her regard. I pitied "her, and reſolved to ſerve her if I could: "yet I would much rather have married "her. However, if I did intend to render "myſelf uſeful to her, it would be only by "pretending to coincide in their ſchemes,

"and

"and do as they did: but that was by no "means determined. Mrs. Hillſden had "been a witneſs to our converſation, and "when I went down ſtairs, found her in "a very great paſſion, adviſing the moſt "violent meaſures; and he and one Cap-"tain Tipton in earneſt diſcourſe concern-"ing of the method of diſpoſing of her "in caſe ſhe ſhould continue refractory.

"When I ſaw Tipton I trembled for "Lydia. Had you known the man as well "as I did, you would have trembled for "the hapleſs young Lady too."

Here he was interrupted by the entrance of the ſurgeon, who came to dreſs his wounds. Rigby found himſelf ſcarcely able to contain his paſſion. His heart was ſwollen with rage and reſentment: it was almoſt burſting. In ſecret had he devoted Wilcox: his vengeance was at that inſtant arming againſt him. But his anxiety to hear the remainder of the ſtory, made him bear, with an appearance of patience, the recital

recital of the evils which his deareſt Lydia had ſuffered, and from the man who was then relating them. His eyes were ſuffuſed with tears at the thoughts of the woes ſhe endured; and his heart throbbed with gratitude and love, when he heard of her conſtancy and affection.

He determined in his own mind to begin with puniſhing Chapman, as ſoon as ever he was ſufficiently recovered; and when he had thoroughly informed himſelf where the others were to be found, to give them the reward of their demerits. The ſurgeon at laſt left his patient, and Rigby thought the viſit very long. When they were again left by themſelves, Chapman reſumed his hiſtory.

"I was interrupted, I believe, when I "came to the converſation between Cap-"tain Tipton and Wilcox, concerning "Miſs Bennet. It is neceſſary you ſhould "know ſomething of him. He was de-"ſcended of a noble family, which he diſ-

"graced

" graced by his crimes: intereſt, not me-
" rit made him commander of a king's
" ſhip. He was broke afterwards for mal
" practices; never was there a man whoſe
" feet were better acquainted with the
" paths of villainy. The boiſterous ſer-
" vice in which he had been bred, had en-
" tirely baniſhed what little humanity he
" might have had originally: cruel and
" barbarous to thoſe beneath him, and in
" his power: abject and fawning on thoſe
" whom he feared. Bound by no ties of
" honor or conſcience, every action was
" proper and juſt with him, as it ſuited
" his own convenience: debauched to the
" laſt exceſs in his commerce with women,
" he knew not what delicacy or love was.

" Theſe were the principles of this man:
" but he had an agreeable face, a good
" perſon, and a winning addreſs. Cunning
" and ſagacious, he penetrated into the
" notions of the perſon whom he was con-
" nected with, and always turned them to

" his

" his own purpoſes, which were ever frau-
" dulent. But if he had any particular
" deep-laid plan of villainy to execute, he
" gave thoſe who knew him well ſufficient
" notice of it, by appearing extraordinarily
" religious and devout. To relate his hiſ-
" tory, or the many tricks he played with
" thoſe who repoſed any confidence in him,
" would take up too much time. But ſuch
" was the man with whom Wilcox was
" then conſulting concerning Miſs Bennet's
" fate. The reſolution ſhe had ſhewn to
" me, in ſo abſolutely prohibiting my
" addreſſes, had enraged Mrs Hillſden,
" and puzzled Wilcox: he knew it would
" be next to an impoſſibility to keep her
" in the houſe undiſcovered for any time;
" and what to do he knew not. Tipton's
" genius had full employment in this
" work of iniquity. He propoſed to take
" her to the Continent, and when they had
" her in a ſtrange country, they would be
" better able to reduce her to their own

" terms: beſides they ſhould be under no " apprehenſions there, and might ſecure " her for ever, if they choſe. This " ſcheme was plauſible: it was the only " one that could be executed, and it was " reſolved to purſue it without delay.

" Tipton, who was ſuppoſed to be better " acquainted with thoſe matters than we " were, undertook to hire a ſloop to carry " us to France, to be ready in three days at " fartheſt. That was ſettled: but the " next circumſtance was how to perſuade " the world that ſhe was dead: that re- " quired ſome contrivance. Among thoſe " women who earn a precarious livelihood " and certain diſeaſe, by a loathſome proſ- " titution, was one whom the ſurgeons " had given over as irrecoverable. On her " we fixed, though almoſt putrid with the " dreadful diſorder; her did we perſuade to " perſonate the pure, the virtuous Lydia: " ſhe ſuffered herſelf to be removed, for a " ſmall ſum of money, to a houſe wherein " ſome

"ſome of our creatures lived, and who "were dependant upon us for their ſubſiſ-"tance. The night of the third day, "this unhappy wretch expired: ſhe was "buried in great pomp, and the newſpa-"pers lamented the untimely death of "Miſs Bennet, who was heireſs to a conſi-"derable fortune, in which ſhe was ſuc-"ceeded by Mr. Wilcox. This affair de-"layed our voyage.

"In the mean time I was permitted to "ſee her: and her couſin ſtill preſſed her "to yield to marry me, as the only means "of extricating her from her preſent con-"finement. I knew that every thing I ſaid "to her, was overheard by Mrs. Hillſ-"den or Wilcox, who were placed in a "cloſet where they could hear, but not "ſee me. Still I endeavoured to win her "conſent; and ſtill ſhe rejected me with "the moſt laudable conſtancy. It is true, "that I ſhould have eſteemed myſelf hap-"py, if I could have married her; but

" as that was now out of the queſtion, I " found my heart affected by her tears, " and I pitied her. I had juſt drawn my " pencil out of my pocket, with an inten- " tion of writing a few words on a ſlip of " paper, to give her ſome hope, when " Wilcox entered the room. Whether he " had any ſuſpicion of me, or whether " he thought the converſation too long, I " cannot pretend to ſay: ſtill ſhe rejected " every propoſal of his or mine with the " greateſt firmneſs. I was obliged to leave " her, and Wilcox again locked her up.

" Mrs. Hillſden did not ſpare her inſults " at this period, which the unhappy young " lady bore with the greateſt patience and " reſignation. Every thing was now pre- " pared for our departure: for the people " who inhabited the houſe, where the ficti- " tious Lydia Bennet was ſuppoſed to die, " were immediately removed to another " quarter of the town, and handſomely " rewarded for their trouble.

" That

"That night it was agreed we ſhould "ſet out, for the ſhip was ready for us. "About twelve we left London, in a poſt "coach, and drove with all expedition "down to Greenwich, where Tipton was "waiting to receive us; and we carried the "unfortunate lady on board, and ſet ſail "immediately. She was more dead than "alive, during this journey. In the coach "ſhe addreſſed Wilcox in the moſt ſuppli-"cating manner, offered him half her for-"tune, and conjured him by every thing "he held dear, to reſtore her to her friends "again. It was entirely unavailing: every "principle of humanity and tenderneſs was "extinct in his breaſt; and though I felt "for Lydia's ſituation, I dared not ſhew "myſelf affected, if I wiſhed to render her "any ſervice. When we were all aboard, "we entered into a conſultation on the "ſteps we ſhould take, to leave her in "France for ever, and by that means en-

" ſure the poſſeſſion of her fortune to " Wilcox.

" Happy in being thus able to get her " ſo ſecurely into our hands, we indulged " our pleaſure, and fell to drinking. Tip- " ton got elevated with the wine, and capa- " ble of any villainous action: he ſwore " he would go to bed to Miſs Bennet, as " ſhe would not be a bit the worſe for the " nunnery, where they intended to place " her afterwards. That ſcoundrel Wil- " cox heard, with patience, the propoſal " for ruining his couſin. I objected to it, " and obſerved that I was bound to defend " the honour of the Lady, whom I had " made propoſals to as my wife, and that " though ſhe refuſed me now, her mind " might change. Wilcox replied, that I " might put that out of my head, for ſhe " was already engaged, and that ſhe would " never conſent." Then, ſaid I, 'let her be 'engaged to whom ſhe will, I will defend 'her honor, and preſerve her from violation.'

" Tipton

"Tipton ſtarted up: but I was next to "the cabin in which ſhe was, and ruſhed "into it. Fortunately there was a caſe of "loaded piſtols of his, hanging up. I "ſeized them, and drawing my own *Couteau* "*de Chaſe*, declared I would defend her, "at the hazard of my life; aſſuring the "trembling maid, ſhe had nothing to fear, "and that I would be reſponſible for her "ſafety."

Nothing could equal Rigby's emotions at this relation: he ſat in a ſtate of the utmoſt torment: the big drops of ſweat poured down his face at the idea of the danger his beloved had been in: but when he found the part which Chapman had taken, he could no longer contain his tranſports; and ſtarting from his ſeat, he run, and threw his arms about his neck, crying out at the ſame time, "I forgive "you, I forgive you all the wrongs you "did to my poor Lydia or to me: I will

" forget them all, and henceforth you ſhall " be my brother and my friend."

" Good Good ! " ſaid the affrighted Chapman, " to whom have I been diſcloſing " this ſcene of iniquity? Are you that " Rigby whom the gentle Lydia has ſo " often called upon in the agony of her " heart? I fear you are: and if ſo, how " ſhall I ſupport your preſence ! "

" The laſt generous behaviour to the " dear girl obliterates the remembrance of " all your former wrongs. You ſhall be " always dear to me," added he, ſtraining him cloſe to his breaſt; " I will love and " honour you ever. But proceed, I be- " ſeech you, proceed with your tale: my " heart is burſting with impatience to hear " it."

" I will," replied Chapman, " as well " as my confuſion will permit me: for I " muſt take ſhame to myſelf for not con- " tinuing my vigilance in her behalf. I " had ſcarcely aſſured her of my reſolution

" of

" of defending her, when Tipton followed " me into the cabin. Deſperate at ſome " moments, yet timid at others, he ſaw " me prepared to receive him, and dreaded " to attack me.

' Why are you armed thus, Chapman?' ſaid he.

' Can you aſk me the reaſon? By every ' ſacred power, I will not leave this Lady ' while I have ability to defend her: you ' know my determination, and had better ' quit me.'

" After ſome unſucceſsful altercation, he " took my advice, and went away. The " poor Lady knew not the cauſe of this " extraordinary exertion in her behalf. It " was hardly poſſible to keep life in her, " what with ſickneſs and terror: however, " ſhe was able to gather from what had " paſſed, that I was her friend. She aſked " me the occaſion of my thus taking her " part; and I endeavoured to avoid the " queſtion as much as poſſible, by aſſuring

" her of my attachment to her intereſt,
" and that I would ſuffer no injury to be
" done to her. This ſeemed to give her
" ſome pleaſure. I perſuaded her to lay
" down on the bed that was prepared for
" her, and I happily prevailed.

'I will watch you, Miſs Bennet,' ſaid I; 'and depend upon my honour and fidelity.'

'I thank you,' ſaid ſhe, 'for your kindneſs, Sir: I will depend upon you, and 'hope you will not abuſe the confidence I 'repoſe in you: My poor Rigby would 'would thank you too for this kindneſs, 'were he here.'

" The tears fell as ſhe ſpoke. I retired,
" till ſhe adjuſted herſelf; and, when I
" thought ſhe had lain down, returned into
" the cabin. We had a great deal of con-
" verſation; and, as I found ſhe was in-
" clinable to ſleep, I left her, and watched
" at the door, for fear of her being ſur-
" prized. My mind was employed in the

" mean

"mean time how to extricate her from "their hands, and reſtore her again to her "friends. I never left her that day; and, "favoured with a proſperous gale, we "landed at Dunkirk that night. I gave "her a caution to ſecure her apartment: "and ſhe retired, as ſoon as ſhe could, to "enjoy a repoſe ſhe ſo much wanted. Wil-"cox reconciled me to Tipton, who apo-"logized for his intended behaviour to "Miſs Bennet, by ſaying he was very "much in liquor, but had really no ſuch "deſign; and gave me many commenda-"tions for my ſpirit and honour in the af-"fair. This being ſettled, we being all "equally engaged in this undertaking, "however villainous, were obliged to unite "together, to enſure the ſucceſs of it. "Many ſchemes were ſtarted, and none "were fixed upon to be put in execution.

"The next night we came to this town, "and here we renewed our deliberations. "They ſeemed to truſt me with their de-

" ſigns, and I gave into them, till I ſhould " get them to ſome place where there was " an Engliſh ambaſſador to apply to in Miſs " Bennet's behalf. It was rather late " when we arrived here; and being natu- " rally fond of the bottle, I ſat up with " Tipton after Wilcox retired to bed. He " ſtaid with us about two hours after ſup- " per, and ſeemed to join with me in " opinion, that it would be better to let " Miſs Bennet return to England, upon " her binding herſelf to give him ſuch a " ſum of money, and not to call him to " any account for what had paſſed. The " moſt moderate meaſures were talked of, " and there ſeemed to be a probability of " doing every thing in a quiet manner. " But this was only a ſcheme to deceive " me, as I have the beſt reaſon in the " world to believe.

" When Tipton and I were left alone " we plied the bottle briſkly, and drank " very hard: I became greatly intoxicated

" in

" in the morning, about three o' clock, and " recollect that Tipton was more in his " ſenſes than I was: and that is all I can " remember. What I ſuppoſe is, that find- " ing me in ſuch a ſtate, and ſo little ca- " pable of defending myſelf, he mixed " ſome drug in my wine, and, when he " found me quite ſtupid, ſtabbed me in " the breaſt; and thinking that he had diſ- " patched me, or that I ſhould bleed to " death, put me to bed, and left me " there.

" When I recovered my ſenſes, which, " I ſuppoſe, the great loſs of blood con- " tributed to reſtore to me ſooner than " it would have otherwiſe happened, I " found myſelf in bed, with my cloaths " on, and all bloody. I had juſt ſtrength " enough left to call for aſſiſtance, which " I fortunately got; and, as ſoon as my " wound was dreſſed, fainted away: and " how long I lay in that ſtate of inſenſibi- " lity I know not; but, when I came to

" myſelf,

" myſelf, and enquired after my compa-
" nions, they were all flown: the Lady
" and Wilcox went one way, and Tipton,
" alone, went another. The latter ſaid,
" that having made me drunk for a frolic,
" they left me there, to ſee how I ſhould
" behave when I became ſober; and they
" would call for me in three or four days.
" I penetrated into the myſtery of this be-
" haviour at once; and ſaw, too late, my
" own folly. I was now in a ſtrange coun-
" try, deſerted by my villainous compa-
" nions; and, with very little money in
" my pocket, expoſed to want and de-
" ſtruction. In theſe hours of diſtreſs and
" pain, all the iniquity of my paſt life
" came in review before me. I ſhuddered
" with horror at the ſight: no friend to apply
" to for relief; for I had been the enemy of
" mankind, and was deſervedly ſhunned:
" no eye wept for me, no heart pitied
" me: my crimes had baniſhed compaſſion
" far away, and I only experienced a part
" of

"of that miſery I had been inſtrumental
"in bringing on others. Theſe uneaſy re-
"flections of a mind laden with ſin re-
"tarded my cure; and my money being
"gradually expended, I was reduced to
"the greateſt want, and had expired mi-
"ſerably, if this gentleman had not hu-
"manely and generouſly relieved and aſ-
"ſiſted me. I ſhall always owe my life to
"him, and, more than that, my future
"and eternal happineſs. My conduct ſhall
"be the reverſe of what it has been; and
"I hope my endeavours to reſtore to thoſe
"I have wronged what I ſo unjuſtly ob-
"tained, will expiate ſome of my offences.
"I will earn my bread by the ſweat of
"my brows, and the labour of my hands,
"before I will return to thoſe paths I have
"ſo happily quitted."

"You will do well," ſaid Hillaſton;
"but let your repentance be ſincere, and
"you ſhall not want a friend."

"Not

"Not while I live," added Rigby. "The "kind, the generous defence of my help- "leſs Lydia deſerves my greateſt and ſin- "cereſt acknowledgements. But yet I am "wretched, for I am in doubt about her "fate: I know not whether ſhe yet lives, "or where ſhe is if ſhe does."

"Really, Sir," ſaid Chapman, "I can- "not tell: but I believe that Wilcox "would not attempt her life; and I ima- "gine, by what I could learn from their "converſation, that their deſign was to "place her in ſome convent in France; but "where, I am totally ignorant. If my "health or my circumſtances would per- "mit, I ſhould be glad to accompany you "in ſearch of her, hoping that heaven "might give me an opportunity of re- "ſtoring her to you, from whom I was ſo "inſtrumental in ſeducing her."

Both Rigby and Hillaſton gave him the ſtrongeſt aſſurances of their friendſhip, and determination to ſerve him: and fearing leſt any

any farther diſcourſe might hurt him, they went away, recommending it to him to let nothing diſturb him, but get well as faſt as he could, that they might go in ſearch of Lydia as ſoon as poſſible.

When the two friends were alone, Rigby gave vent to the rage and grief which tore his breaſt, and which he was obliged to conceal before Chapman. Hillaſton endeavoured to calm his tranſports.

"Shall I not be revenged?" exclaimed the frantic lover: "Shall I not inflict "puniſhment on that villain who has blaſt-"ed my hopes, injured my love, and al-"moſt reduced me to deſpair? Shall I "ever forget the wrongs he has done "thee, my beſt-beloved Lydia?" — No. "And if heaven gives me life, I will "avenge thee. Think, Hillaſton, think of "that hapleſs innocent in the hands of ſuch "ruffians! Is not the thought diſtraction? "Chapman, I will adore thee: thou ſavedſt "my Lydia's purity from contamination:

"nor

" nor was her virgin honour violated by " brutal force. That, even that, is ſome " comfort to me: for I could only have " outlived the puniſhment of ſuch villains, " ere I deſcended to the grave myſelf."

Hillaſton ſoothed and conſoled him: and they determined to go in ſearch of her through that part of France which was neareſt to them; as they concluded he could not have gone far in the time he was abſent from England: but Chapman's weak ſtate delayed them, as they reſolved to take him along with them.

In a week's time he was greatly recovered, and as they propoſed making ſhort and eaſy journeys, which the nature of their enquiries obliged them to, was thought able to go along with them. During that week, Rigby was always with Chapman, making him repeat that part of his ſtory, where Lydia was moſt aggrieved, or when ſhe had mentioned him. At the melancholly tale, his breaſt heaved with ſighs, and his eyes

poured

poured forth bitter tears. When he had recounted the treatment ſhe had met with from Wilcox and Tipton, and their infamous deſigns againſt her honor, his heart ſwelled with rage: not able to contain himſelf, his anger led him to form the heavieſt curſes on them.

At length the hour came, that was to carry him in queſt of his faithful, his adorable Lydia: hope was his companion, and love was his guide. But his heart began to deſpair, when, after three months ſpent in the moſt diligent enquiries at every convent in all the towns he went through, he could receive no account of Lydia. The more ſanguine his hopes had been, the more dreadful and piercing was the diſappointment he met. His patience was almoſt worn out; eſpecially as he imagined he was waſting time to very little purpoſe, when he might return to England, and wreſt the ſecret of the place of her confinement from Wilcox. With this

deſign

deſign he addreſſed his aſſociates. "It is "in vain for us, my good friends, to conti- "nue the ſearch, which can be productive "of nothing but diſappointment and trou- "ble. For my ſhare, I am determined to "give it over and return to England: and "if Wilcox is yet on earth, if Heaven "has not called him to receive the puniſh- "ments due to his crimes, I will force him "to tell me where Miſs Bennet is immured. "We have already waſted too much time, "and I wiſh I had purſued this plan at "firſt: perhaps, ere this, I ſhould have "been informed of my fate, and not ſpent "ſo many hours in a ſtate of anxious un- "certainty, worſe than death.'

Chapman, who gained the eſteem both of Hillaſton and Rigby, by the many good qualities he poſſeſſed, and which they found in him every day, joined him in opinion, and Hillaſton was obliged to ſubmit. Inſtead of continuing their courſe, they directed it towards the ſea-coaſt of Normandy;

as

as from thence was their ſhorteſt paſſage to England. The ſecond night after this determination, they lay at a ſmall town on the confines of Champagne. Before they had retired to reſt, they had employed themſelves in contriving in what manner to come at Wilcox. This was their chief and general converſation: it was the only idea that engaged the afflicted Rigby's imagination; whilſt the hope and deſire of vengeance ſupported his ſpirits, and enabled him to endure his woes. His friends retired to reſt: he ſat a while in his chamber, reading, bebefore he went to bed, and then he could not ſleep. Indeed that kind ſoother of ſorrow had been long a ſtranger to him. He toſſed and tumbled about, but he could not cloſe his eyes. Whilſt he lay thus tormented with a thouſand different thoughts, that all conſpired to increaſe his uneaſineſs, he was alarmed by a great noiſe. He ſtarted up, and liſtened more attentively. He heard the cry of fire. "I may be of ſervice to

"ſome

" ſome of the unhappy ſufferers," ſaid he, throwing himſelf out of bed, and putting on his cloaths: " though wretched myſelf, " yet let me not forget the cauſe of huma- " nity."

He called Hillaſton up, as he went by his room, and hurried to the ſcene of diſtreſs. It was in his neighbourhood: a convent was on fire, the flames raged furiouſly, the gates were thrown open, and the ſacred ſanctuary of recluſe piety was now entered by every body who was willing to aſſiſt the affrighted nuns.

Amongſt the foremoſt of thoſe who ruſhed through the flames, was Rigby. He ran to that part where they burned with the greateſt fierceneſs. He was one of the foremoſt in the aſſiſtance of the diſtreſſed. Thus employed, he thought he heard his name called: ſuch was the noiſe, ſuch the confuſion, that he could not diſtinguiſh it clearly: a ſecond time he heard it more ſhrilly than before: the voice was familiar

to him. He ſtarted, and gazed wildly about. He turned his eyes to a corner of the building, towards which the flames were rolling with great rapidity, and perceived a female in diſtreſs. He held his arms out to receive her. The height was but ſmall: ſhe flung herſelf down, and he caught her. Her veil fell off, and he diſcovered the face of his Lydia. "It is! it is her! it is my "Lydia!" cried the enraptured lover, preſſing her to his breaſt. But ſhe was lifeleſs: fear and joy had deprived her of ſpeech. Diſtracted with a thouſand tender paſſions, he knew not what to do. The firſt thing that ſuggeſted itſelf was, to carry her from the reach of the flames. He ſnatched her up, and ran with her into the garden. She recovered her ſenſes. "It is my Rigby!" ſaid ſhe: the ſight of him was more than ſhe could bear, and ſhe cloſed her eyes again.

The terrified Rigby thought ſhe was gone for ever. His trembling arms could no longer

longer ſupport her, and he ſhould have dropped her on the ground, if Hillaſton, who purſued his friend's ſteps, had not come at that moment to his relief. "I have "her, Hillaſton!" ſaid he, breathleſs with fear at the ſight of her in that condition. "I have her again! but ſhe is dead: ſhe is "loſt to me. Take her, I beſeech you, I am "incapable of ſuporting her any longer."

Hillaſton received the exanimated maid, whilſt Rigby watched her return to life, with looks of inexpreſſible love and anxious fear. At length ſhe recovered herſelf, and convinced of the reality of her Rigby's preſence, gave a looſe to her joy.

He ſnatched her to his panting breaſt: a thouſand kiſſes did he imprint on her lips. He knew not what he did: his brain was almoſt turned, by the rapturous reverſe of fortune he experienced, in finding all he held dear, ſo unexpectedly again.

Nor was ſhe leſs affected. Hillaſton did not behold their mutual joy unmoved: he

he led them towards the inn, yet doubting of the exiſtence of each other, and ſcarcely believing their happineſs to be real.

With ſome difficulty was ſhe taken through the fire, and conducted towards their lodgings. Still exceſſively agitated and terrified at what was paſt, her trembling limbs could ſcarcely ſuſtain her; her ſpirits were all alarmed, and ſhe hardly could be ſaid to enjoy her reaſon.

"Oh! Mr. Rigby," ſaid ſhe, "how "came you here! by what lucky chance "have I found you at laſt? Ah, I have "ſuffered a great deal ſince I ſaw you. "Why would you leave me, ſince you "were my only friend?"

The tears following theſe words, uttered in the moſt plaintive voice, pierced Rigby to the heart.

"I will never leave you more, my ado-"rable Lydia," replied he; "no power ſhall "ever ſeparate us. I have been long ſeek-

" ing thee, my love, and Heaven be praiſed " I have found thee at laſt."

By this time they reached the inn. The firſt object that ſtruck her eyes, was Chapman, fighting with another man. The moment ſhe ſaw them, ſhe gave a loud ſcream, and fainted away again in Rigby's arms, who removed her from the ſcene of confuſion, into an appartment.

Hillaſton ran to the combatants.

" Die, thou treacherous villain," ſaid Chapman, making a longe at his antagoniſt: he could not parry the thruſt, and it brought him to the earth.

" That is the ſcoundrel," ſaid he, " that " ſtabbed me, when he had intoxicated me " with wine, and ſtupified me with medi- " cinès: the hour of vengeance is at laſt " come, and I have fairly rewarded his vil- " lainy."

Hillaſton raiſed the wretched man, and procured ſome help for him. He acknowledged before all the people whom the rencontre

contre had drawn about them, that he received his death juſtly from Chapman's hands, in reward of his treachery.

On being aſked by Hillaſton, what brought him there? he replied, "to ſeek "for Miſs Bennet, and chance alone had "conducted him.

"After Willcox and I," ſaid he, "had "ſettled the plan of Chapman's deſtruc- "tion, which I endeavoured to put in exe- "cution, by ſtabbing him when incapable of "helping himſelf, I thought he would, "bleed to death, and giving notice "to Wilcox of what had happened, "made the beſt of my way to Dunkirk, "where I met a ſhip juſt going to ſail, and "landed ſafely in England.

"Wilcox was not long after me, but "when we met, refuſed to tell me where "he had placed Lydia. This was arguing "a diſtruſt of me, that inſpired me with "a deſire of revenge. I had heard him "caſually ſay, when he firſt arrived, that "he had come ſtrait to Havre, from the

" town where he had placed Miſs Bennet.'

" I reſolved to try and find her out, and " if I could prevail on her to marry me, " to releaſe her, and then call Wilcox to " an account for the miſmanagement of her " fortune, and the injuries he had done to " her. Beſides her perſonal qualifications, " ſhe was a prize worth looking after; and " her eſtate would ſerve to clear me in the " world, with which I was very much em- " barraſſed.

" I could not by any means ſift out from " Wilcox, the place of her confinement: " he ever eluded my enquiries. With ſome " difficulty I raiſed as much money as " would bear my expences, and I have " been a fortnight in France. It is not " many hours ſince I arrived here, and " here I meet my death: I thought it was " near at hand, when I ſaw the appearance " of Chapman, whom I ſuppoſed to be no " more; and I confeſs I deſerve it."

" Let

"Let me have your forgiveneſs before "you die," ſaid Chapman: "badly as you "have treated me, I am ſorry to have been "the inſtrument of your death, and con- "ſidering the life you have lived, lament "my being concerned in plunging you in- "to eternity."

"I forgive you," replied the dying man, "very heartily, and may Heaven be as "merciful to me: Chapman, I am going "where my art and hypocriſy will not a- "vail me. How I have lived, I dread to "think; but do you amend your ways: "every thing before me is darkneſs, doubt "and horror. Wretched is my ſtate, and "miſerable do I die. I dare not aſk for "mercy, who have never ſhewn any; and "how ſhall I pray to a God, whom I have "ever been at war with; then I know my "fate, and eternal miſery muſt be my "portion: yet do you pray for me—I can "no more. This farce of life is ended."

His laſt breath accompanied theſe words,

and he cloſed his eyes, to open them no more. Hillaſton and Chapman trembled with horror at his dreadful exit. As he had himſelf cleared Chapman in French to his auditors, Hillaſton explained the reſt of his ſpeech to them. They ſhruged up their ſhoulders, pitied the heretic, and called it an unfortunate *rencontre*. Rigby, with ſome aſſiſtance, had recalled his Lydia to life again. She looked about for ſome time, as if terrified at ſomething ſhe ſaw.

"Are you ſtill here?" ſaid ſhe to Rigby. "Did not I ſee two men fighting?"

"You did, my love."

"Oh! ſave me from them, for they are "two of thoſe that carried me away."

"Fear nothing, my deareſt, my beſt "Lydia: I know one of them."

"Aye, he was my friend; and they "killed him, I thought: but you do not "know the other."

"No:

"No: but I will directly;" ſaid he, going.

"Oh, do not you leave me, do not you! "I ſhall expire with fear if you do."

She held him as ſhe ſpoke.

"I will not quit you for a moment," ſaid he, preſſing her trembling hand to his lips: and deſiring a ſervant to ſend Mr. Hillaſton up to him, ſeated himſelf by his newly recovered treaſure. Hillaſton's countenance was expreſſive of the horrid ſcene he had juſt been a witneſs to: and, on his friend's relating his Lydia's apprehenſions, he told him what had paſſed.

"Chapman has robbed me of my "vengeance; but yet it was due to his "hand:—yet, would that I had met the "villain!"

"You frighten me to death, Mr. Rig- "by. Has Mr. Chapman killed him?"

"He has, Madam."

"Good God!—Let us haſten from "this ſcene of death: I ſhall not be eaſy "till I quit this deteſted country."

Rigby conſented to depart as ſoon as poſſible; and requeſted the favour of Hillaſton, as morning approached, to ſee in what manner they could beſt get off. In his abſence the enraptured Rigby poured forth his heart before his miſtreſs, and from her he received the moſt tender marks of reciprocal love.

While they were thus mutually giving and receiving pleaſure, Chapman ſent word to Rigby by Hillaſton, that, if it was permitted, he ſhould eſteem it a very great happineſs to have an opportunity of aſking Miſs Bennet's pardon. She declared ſhe ſhould be very glad to ſee him, and acknowledged herſelf under the greateſt obligations to him. He came into the room, but ſhe could not prevent his throwing himſelf on his knees before her.

"I am

"I am aſhamed, Madam, to appear in "your preſence, after having acted ſo "baſe a part as I formerly did by you: "but I hope—"

"Indeed, Sir, I cannot ſpeak to you "while you remain in ſo improper a poſ- "ture. I have many thanks to return to "you for your gallant and generous de- "fence of me. Pray, Sir, riſe."

He obeyed.

"I conſpired to deceive you, Madam: "and, when I was ſenſible of the crime I "had committed, the leaſt I could do was "to endeavour to repair it as well as I "was able. If you forgive me I ſhall be "happy."

"I do indeed, Sir; and, whenever it "is in my power, will make you ſenſible "of my gratitude."

"Carriages are prepared," ſaid Hilla- ſton; "and we had better make the ſhort- "eſt way poſſible from this place."

They agreed to his propoſal, and ſet off immediately. Hillaſton was not the leaſt happy of the company: he longed to ſee his Hannah again, with whom he had regularly correſponded during his abſence from her. They proceeded by the ſhorteſt road to Havre. Rigby travelled with his beloved Lydia in one carriage, and Chapman with Hillaſton in another. During the journey Rigby prevailed on Lydia to relate to him the accidents that befell her ſince he left her. Though he was perfectly well acquainted with them, yet they had a greater effect upon him when told by her. He kiſſed the tear from her cheek, which the remembrance of her misfortunes cauſed, and often accompanied her.

"I found myſelf ſecure," ſaid ſhe, continuing her hiſtory, "in the friendſhip of "Mr. Chapman; and, from the generous "concern he ſhewed for me, was con-"vinced that he would give me more ef-

"fectual

" fectual proofs of his ſincerity, as ſoon as
" ever it was in his power. I ſaw he was
" afraid to ſpeak to me, leſt they ſhould
" fathom his intentions, and prevent them.
" The ſecond night after our landing we
" lay at a little town: Wilcox, Chapman,
" and the Captain, who was killed, ſitting
" up as uſual, after I retired to lament my
" misfortunes, and being thus torn away
" from my friends, in a ſtrange country,
" and in the power of a man who, for
" aught I knew, intended to ſacrifice me
" for the ſake of my fortune. My reflec-
" tions were really diſmal. I ſpent the
" night in tears; and often did I wiſh for
" you, for I had no other friend: the
" man who was neareſt allied in blood to
" me, ſeeking my deſtruction. By the firſt
" dawn of the day, I heard him at my
" door, deſiring me to prepare myſelf to
" go along with him inſtantly. I had not
" taken off my cloaths ſince I had left
" England: and I had ſtarted up immedi-

" ately. I found him waiting for me, and " a carriage ready: he would not admit " me to parley with him, but put me into " the chaiſe, and getting in after me, it " drove off at a furious rate. When I had " a little recovered myſelf, I aſked him why " he treated me thus.

' To preſerve you from falling into the ' hands of the man I deteſt,' ſaid he, ' and ' to ſecure you an happy and ſafe retire- ' ment from the ills of the world, which ' ſo weak and unexperienced a girl as you ' are, would moſt undoubtedly ſuffer, were ' you not properly taken care of.'

' Good God! what will become of me! ' Where is Mr. Chapman?'

' He has paid the tribute of his folly, in ' taking your part: Tipton has diſpatched ' him.'

" I was ſtruck dumb with horror: I had " every thing to fear from the villainy of " the man whom I was then with: yet I " cared not, and upbraided him in the " bit-

" bittereſt terms for his uſage of me: re-
" minded him of the obligations he was un-
" der to my father, and conjured him to ſet
" me at liberty; again offering to reſign
" him half my fortune."

'That will not do,' ſaid he, 'when I
'can have it all. Already your death is
'believed in England: the newſpapers have
'publiſhed it; and there was a young wo-
'man, who aſſumed your name, and per-
'ſonated you, buried, and regiſtered pro-
'perly. I have laid ſuch a train as cannot
'eaſily be traced!'

'O heaven!' exclaimed I, 'what will
'my poor Rigby ſuffer!'

'I rejoice in being the occaſion of his
'ſufferings: I enjoy his miſery: I believe
'he loved you, and the greater his torment:
'he triumphed over me once, it is my turn
'now: I hear his groans, I ſee his anguiſh,
'and deride them both!'

" I was almoſt diſtracted at this treat-
" ment. I knew, by my own heart, what

" yours

" yours muſt feel, and it gave a double
" load of woe to ſupport.

" In three days travelling, almoſt with-
" out interuption, we came to the convent,
" where you ſo happily found me. Wilcox
" had heard a character of the abbeſs, and
" knew how to deal with her. Her bigotry
" and avarice were at continual war for a
" ſuperiority; and they governed her: both
" conſpiring to deprive her of humanity or
" pity. He told her, that he was my eldeſt
" brother; that he had been born of ca-
" tholic parents, and educated in the prin-
" ciples of that holy religion: that being
" in a land of heretics, I had indicated an
" intention of quitting the faith of my fa-
" thers, and marrying a man who was a
" proteſtant, of mean family, and who
" would force me to quit my religion; and
" that, in order to ſecure me in the right
" way, he had, at the peril of his life,
" brought me to her."

' The

'The laws of England,' ſaid he, 'being 'very ſtrict againſt ſuch proceedings: but 'I could not ſee her going to ruin herſelf 'eternally, without doing my utmoſt en-'deavours to prevent her. Therefore I 'muſt commit her to your care, having 'heard the greateſt character of your piety 'and virtue.'

"As he ſpoke, he put a ſum of money "into her hands, adding, that he would "pay for me a double penſion, in order "that I might be uſed well; and advanced "her two years before-hand.

"She praiſed his conduct, and compared "him to all the ſaints in her calendar.

"I had got the better of the ſurprize "this falſe tale had occaſioned, and inter-"rupted her by telling my ſtory. She "would not hear me, and I walked into "thoſe horrid walls.

"He remained with her for ſome time "after I was gone, as I heard, and then "gave her inſtructions how to treat me:

"for

" for upon no account was I permitted to
" have pen or ink, and I was moſt ſtrictly
" watched by ſome of the nuns, who were
" her creatures: for there are as many
" parties and intrigues within the walls of
" a convent, as in a court.

" Thus deprived of every poſſible means
" of returning to my native country and
" my friends: I paſſed my wretched hours
" in affliction; but yet, I indulged an hope,
" that you would not ſee me thus abuſed,
" and would trace this iniquitous affair to
" the ſource. Alas! I could lend you no
" clue to help you to unravel this myſtery.
" I was a wretched priſoner, and had no
" proſpect of redreſs; yet heaven was
" kind and merciful to me: it inſpired me
" with the hope of ſeeing you once more;
" and that ſupported my ſpirits, and ena-
" bled me to bear the inſults I met with
" every hour, from ſuperſtitious zeal, and
" the hardſhips I endured every day, by
" being obliged to conform to the rules of

" the

" the houſe. The greateſt conſolation I " had was the company of one of the " nuns, who was forced into the convent, " contrary to her inclination, by her fa- " mily: Her name was Beatrice. She was " a lovely girl, ſcarce twenty. She uſed " to mix her tears with mine; and I re- " turned the compliment, in lamenting her " confinement, and her melancholy fate: " but we could ſeldom indulge ourſelves " in this delightful confidence; for the " mother abbeſs placed ſpies over us, be- " fore whom we could not open our diſ- " treſſed hearts, or vent our complaints. " Thus did I paſs away my time, till that " happy night that brought you to my " relief, and I think no more of my trou- " bles."

" Beloved of my ſoul," ſaid the enrap- tured youth, preſſing her to his panting breaſt, " it ſhall be all my future endea- " vour to make you forget them. To " thee, and thee alone will I devote my- " ſelf,

" ſelf, and may the bleſſing of that bene-
" ficent God, who has ſo wondrouſly led
" me with a mighty hand to relieve you,
" crown our days with peace and joy.

They arrived ſafe at Havre, and as Lydia had loſt every thing in the fire, ſhe was obliged to ſupply herſelf with neceſſaries there. Rigby had offered his aſſiſtance to her, and when ſhe took the ſum ſhe thought requiſite, told him, ſmiling, that he muſt be her banker then, and ſhe would endeavour to repay him ſome time or another.

" That look of kindneſs, Lydia, is ſuffi-
" cient to repay me, were it all I have in
" the world."

Every day, every hour, did the happy couple demonſtrate their pure and virtuous affection more fully, and become dearer, if poſſible, to each other.

With a proſperous and favourable gale did our joyful company leave France. They ſaw with pleaſure the coaſt leſſening

to

to their view, till they loſt it entirely. While they were on their paſſage, they had a conſultation in what manner to proceed; Hillaſton offered it as his opinion, that the ſureſt way would be for Rigby to give himſelf a lawful claim, by marrying Miſs Bennet, to call Wilcox to an account; and that the ceremony ſhould be performed as ſoon as it conveniently could, after they landed; and that he, at the ſame time, had deſigned to make Hannah Wilkins his wife. Rigby replied, that he would leave it to him, but that he himſelf had not yet ſpoke to Miſs Bennet, to know if it would be agreeable to her to proceed in ſo haſty a manner. At that moment he felt ſome uneaſy ſenſations in his own boſom, that had been drown'd before in the flood of joy that overwhelmed him. It was very true that he had every thing to hope from the affection which Miſs Bennet had for him; but the great inequality between them,

them, in point of fortune, hurt him. His generous heart would have been much better pleaſed to have conferred wealth on her, than have received it from her. The world alſo would impute to intereſted motives, what ſprung from pure affection,—he wiſhed to be able to prove his love to Lydia by ſome other means than profeſſion. He went down to her to the cabbin, and informed her what his friend had been propoſing. "But how, Lydia," added he, "can I pretend to ſolicit you to wed me? "I who am not by any means poſſeſs'd "of an independance—My aunt may take "a diſlike to me: ſhe is old and capricious, "and may not perhaps remember me."

"What have I done to you, Mr. "Rigby," ſaid ſhe, interrupting him, "that "you will not permit me to oblige you? "Without your partaking it, my fortune "would not afford me pleaſure—ſince you "won't refuſe this hand —" and ſhe ſtretch'd it out to him:

"No,

"No, that I would not," ſaid he, folding it in both his hands, "though death "was to be the conſequence of my ac- "cepting it.—Thou kind, thou generous "girl, how ſhall I ever make thee amends "for this goodneſs?"

"I will be contented," ſaid ſhe, "if you "will only continue to love me."

"My future life ſhall convince you of "the ſincerity and extent of my paſſion."

They had a quick and good paſſage: and great was Lydia's joy when ſhe landed in England again. She required ſome repoſe after the fatigues ſhe had undergone; and Rigby propoſed that ſhe ſhould ſtay for a day or two. at Southampton, where they landed, to refreſh herſelf. In the mean time Hillaſton and Chapman went up to London, where they hired a large houſe, ready furniſhed, and immediately wrote to his mother and ſiſter to come up to him, acquainting them with his approaching nuptials. He alſo wrote to Wilkins and

his

his wife, entreating them to bring their daughter with them, and informing them of the reaſon of this requeſt; deſiring, at the ſame time, to know if Wilcox was in that part of the country; and, above all things, to keep their arrival a profound ſecret. In the limited time Rigby and Lydia followed him, and found every thing prepared for their reception. The next day Mrs. and Miſs Hillaſton arrived, to whom Miſs Bennet was introduced; and the intended change in her circumſtances, when communicated to them, did not fail to crimſon over her cheeks with a bluſh. Lydia, happy in their acquaintance, requeſted their aſſiſtance to procure thoſe things which ſhe wanted, as ſhe could not ſend down to the country for her cloaths, or what ſhe might have occaſion for. While they were about ſettling the important buſineſs of dreſs, an expreſs arrived from Farmer Wilkins. Incloſed to Hillaſton, came a packet

packet directed to Rigby; but he was from home. Hillaſton found, by the Farmer's letter, that they ſhould be up within a week, and that Wilcox was then in the country, and had been guilty of many acts of oppreſſion towards his tenants; and that many whiſpers had been circulated about on account of his couſin's ſudden death; but that nobody dared ſpeak openly.

The Ladies returned before Rigby: and he communicated to them the intelligence he received. Lydia turned pale when ſhe heard Wilcox's name mentioned, for ſhe had not, even at that moment, overcome her fears of him.

When Rigby came home, Hillaſton put the packet into his hands, the ſeals of which he broke with a palpitating heart. Lydia watched his countenance as he read, and ſaw his blood mount into his cheeks, and his eyes ſparkled with joy.

"I

"I have now, Miſs Bennet," ſaid he, "ſome opportunity of, in part, returning "the obligations I am under to you. But, "nevertheleſs, they ſhall not be forgotten "by me."

He put the letter into her hands, which, at his deſire, ſhe read aloud. It was from the gentleman whom his aunt, lately deceaſed, had made joint executor of her will along with him, and who informed him that her eſtate, after the legacies which ſhe had bequeathed to ſome others were paid, would amount to above forty thouſand; but that this ſum was left him upon condition that he ſhould aſſume the name of Kingſley. The whole company congratulated him on this acceſſion to his fortune, except Miſs Bennet.

"Ah," ſaid ſhe, "I find that fortune is "determined that you ſhan't be obliged to "me. I can't help it."

"Charming Lydia," ſaid he, taking her hand reſpectfully, "the preſent you have

"already

" already made me of your heart, is a " greater obligation than ever I can repay " —but will you think as well of Kingſley " as you have done of Rigby?"

" I am ſo uſed to the former name, that " I ſhall have but little regard for the " other.—I ſhall never like it, though it " has beſtowed ſuch a fortune upon you."

This produced a ſmile from the company, who partook of their happineſs.

The next day the Wilkins's arrived, and the enamoured Hillaſton preſented his future bride to his mother and ſiſter. The innocence, the modeſty and beauty of the bluſhing Hannah, gained all their affections. So great was the love which the good old Lady had for her ſon, that ſhe was happy by ſeeing him ſo. Lydia was particularly fond of her, from the many commendations ſhe heard Kingſley give her. Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins were overjoy'd at the proſpect of their daughter's happineſs, and the lucky change that had been in Rigby's affairs ſince they ſaw him. When he told

the Farmer, that he muſt not call him Rigby any more, he replied that he cou'd call him nothing elſe, though he was to get an eſtate by it. As all the neceſſary parties were then preſent, Hillaſton propoſed that their happineſs ſhould be delayed no longer than the next day. The old people joined him in opinion, and they overruled the objections that the girls yet had. In the evening they procured licences. Hillaſton told Wilkins that he had ſome buſineſs at a lawyer's chambers in the Temple, as they went by it, and deſired the favour of him to ſtep in along with them, as he had occaſion both for Mr. Kingſley and him to witneſs a deed. The truth of it was, that he had made a ſettlement of three hundred pounds a year on Hannah Wilkins, if ſhe ſhould ſurvive him, of which he and Kingſley were truſtees.

The Farmer ſcarcely could find words to thank him, for this unexpected generous action. All he required of him was to conceal it, he ſaid, 'till after the ceremony

mony was over. The next day, the happieſt that ever roſe on the enamoured couples, joined the hands of Kingſley with his adorable Lydia, and Hillaſton with the lovely Hannah.

Wilkins gave his daughter away: and Kingſley received from the hands of his friend, the moſt precious gift that heaven could beſtow.

Mr. Wilkins and his wife, and Mrs. Hillaſton could not reſtrain the tear of joy that trickled down their cheeks, when they pronounced the parental bleſſing on their happy children—All was joy, all was rapture: nor was Chapman, who had been the happy inſtrument of their preſent felicity, forgotten on the occaſion. Mrs. Kingſley preſented him with a valuable diamond ring from her own finger; and Kingſley, taking him aſide, aſſured him, as ſoon as ever his affairs were ſettled, as he yet wanted him to be confronted with Wilcox, that he would take care of his eſtabliſhment in life. Chapman, thoroughly

aſhamed of his paſt conduct, and incited, by the virtuous examples that he ſaw before him, to follow their ſteps, was entirely reformed, and truly abhorred his former way of life.

This day, ſo replete with joy, was temper'd with a decent feſtivity, and crown'd with a rapturous night, which gave to the longing arms of the two bridegrooms, the poſſeſſion of all thoſe wiſhes which virtuous love can form. Nor were the brides leſs happy in their huſbands, whoſe affections they could not entertain a doubt of, and in whom their future felicity was all centered.

In a week's time Wilkins and his wife went home, and the new-married pairs prepared to follow them within a few days. Mrs. Hillaſton and her daughter alſo went home to prepare for the reception of her daughter-in-law, whoſe modeſt and affectionate behaviour greatly endeared her to them both.

Within the appointed time, Mr. and Mrs. Kingſley, and Mr. and Mrs. Hillaſton, accom-

accompanied by Chapman, went down to Farmer Wilkins's. The next day Hillaſton, attended by Chapman, rode over to the late Mr. Bennet's houſe, where Wilcox now reſided, it being the manſion-houſe of the eſtate, and more commodious than his own. He deſired Chapman to remain at ſome little diſtance out of ſight, though within call, and to be ready to appear when ſummon'd. He went to the houſe, accompanied by his ſervant, and Mr. Wilcox ſoon waited on him in the memorable parlour which had been formerly alſo the ſcene of his diſgrace. He ſtarted at the ſight of Hillaſton, whom he well remembered again. However, he endeavoured to conceal his confuſion, and deſired his viſitor very politely to ſit down.

"Sir," ſaid Hillaſton, as he ſeated himſelf, "I come on a meſſage to you from "Mr. and Mrs. Kingſley, who deſire to "know by what authority you enjoy this "eſtate, and to recommend it to you to "evacuate this houſe as ſoon as poſſible,

" and alſo to prepare an account of the " receipts of rent and money during the " time you have been in poſſeſſion of it."

" Really, Sir, this is a very extraor- " dinary meſſage, and delivered in as " ſtrange a manner—Kingſley—Kingſley— " I know no ſuch perſons, Sir, and there- " fore I ſhall return them no anſwer. And " I ſhall maintain the poſſeſſion of this " houſe againſt every perſon who can pre- " tend to have a claim to it."

" Then you have, no doubt, a very " good right, Sir: but, as I am a meſ- " ſenger, an agent only in this matter, " I cannot return without ſome account to " give them of the anſwer you ſhall make."

" I ſhall make none other than I have " already done. But pray who is this Mr. " Kingſley that has employed you on this " ſleeveleſs errand?"

" He is a young gentleman whom you " have formerly known well, Sir. His " name was Thomas Rigby: he has now " changed it for a very conſiderable eſtate,

" which

" which was left him on that condition,
" and his wife is nearly related to you, Sir:
" her name was Lydia Bennet, whoſe fa-
" ther was your uncle."

" That muſt be a falſehood, Sir: my
" Couſin has been dead four months and
" upwards. I ſaw her buried. I was with
" her when ſhe died. As her heir I in-
" herit this eſtate."

" This is ſomething odd, indeed. I
" thought I could have ſworn to Miſs
" Bennet."

" Pray, Sir, did not you once make a
" diſturbance at my houſe in town?—And
" about her death too, if I don't miſtake?

" You do not, Sir; you are right enough;
" I did ſo."

" Then I wonder at your preſumption in
" appearing before me again."

" I would not have done it, but in a par-
" ticular cauſe."

" Then now, Sir, I beg you may
" retire."

"You fly in a paſſion, Sir, and I "want to talk this matter over coolly with "you."

"So extraordinary and inſulting an er- "rand, baniſhes coolneſs: I muſt repeat "my deſire."

"Upon my word, Sir, this haſte will "not contribute to the ſettling of mat- "ters. Do you know one George Chap- "man?"

"I do not."

"Not know him! that is ſtrange. Do "you know Captain Tipton, then?"

"Why theſe queſtions? I ſhall anſwer "none of them."

"Tom," ſaid Hillaſton, to his ſer- vant, who was in waiting, "deſire the "gentleman to ſtep hither: you need be "under no apprehenſions, Mr. Wilcox, he "is no ſtranger."

"Sir," ſaid Wilcox, riſing from his chair, "I do not underſtand this treat- "ment. Nothing but your being under my "roof, ſhould have protected you ſo long.

"Retire

"Retire then, Sir, before I am obliged "to violate the laws of hoſpitality."

"Wretched man! in a few minutes "your preſent importance will vaniſh, "it will be no more heard of Thy infa- "tuation leads thee to the brink of a pre- "cipice, that but to look at, would make "reaſon giddy.

"Thy arts are all found out, thy "ſchemes all diſcovered, thy myſterious "behaviour all expoſed, and made pub- "lic. Puniſhment awaits thee: condign "exemplary puniſhment: know, that "Miſs Bennet has been found; that ſhe "is now married to the man you deteſt, "and they are come to claim and aſſert "their rights. What can you ſay to op- "poſe them?"

Every word of this ſpeech harrowed Willcox's ſoul with fear. It redoubled when Chapman entered the room, and ſtood before him. Conſcious guilt ſtruck him dumb. His hair roſe an end on his head, his eyes were juſt burſting from

their ſockets, and his whole appearance indicated the extreme of terror and amazement.

"You may look, Wilcox," ſaid Chapman, "but it is really me who ſtand be-
"fore you. The man whom you thought
"was fallen a ſacrifice to your arts, and
"the villainy of your baſe aſſociate, now
"lives to proclaim aloud your crimes.
"That midnight treacherous aſſaſſin has
"already fallen by my hand; and the
"pit which he dug for me, has received
"him. The hour of your diſgrace and
"ſhame, is not far off, and I ſhall be re-
"venged on you, for adding to the crimes
"that have polluted my ſoul."

Wilcox threw himſelf into a chair, and remained ſilent for a little time; his hand covered his face, and he ſat as if ſtruck with thunder. He was rouſed from this ſtate of inſenſibility, by Hillaſton's aſking him, what he intended to do.

"I know

"I know what I have to do, very well," replied he, fiercely. "Your contrivance "will have no effect upon me. I ſhall "maintain the right I am poſſeſſed of, "whilſt I have life: and as for your hav- "ing my couſin Lydia Bennet, it is an ab- "ſolute falſehood, which I ſhall treat as "ſuch, till I ſee her myſelf."

"That you ſhall ſoon be ſatisfied in," ſaid Hillaſton. "Expect to ſee the "lawful miſtreſs of this houſe in a few "hours."

He and Chapman left the place directly, and rode to Wilkins's as faſt as they could, and related the reception they had met with. Upon which it was judged adviſeable for Mr. and Mrs. Kingſley to go over to him.

This ſhe at firſt objected very ſtrongly to, but was at laſt perſuaded to comply with, for ſhe could not get rid of thoſe terrors which the ſight of him would create, and even the mention of him occaſioned. Some hours elapſed, and it was

the

the afternoon before the party arrived at Mr. Willcox's. They entered the area before the houſe, without ſeeing any body: their own ſervants opened the coach door, and Hillaſton and Chapman entered the houſe, for Mrs. Kingſley would not quit her huſband, without meeting even a ſervant.

They applied themſelves to a bell which they ſaw, and a man at laſt appeared, bearing the moſt evident marks of confuſion and fear in his countenance.

"Where is Mr. Willcox?"

"He is dead."

"Dead!" ſaid the aſtoniſhed Hillaſ-
"ton."

"Yes, he killed himſelf, Sir," ſaid the fellow, his teeth chattering with fear.

"Oh, God, have mercy on him. Where
"is his wife?"

"She is in fits above ſtairs."

Hillaſton run out to acquaint Mr. and Mrs. Kingſley with this dreadful accident. She was obliged to be ſupported into the houſe,

houſe, ſo much was ſhe affected. After ſhe was a little recovered, ſhe propoſed ſeeing Mrs. Willcox, whom ſhe truly loved, and taking her away from this ſcene of diſtreſs.

A ſervant was ſent to her, who informed her of Lydia's arrival, and deſire to ſee her. She begged her to come to her. Lydia went inſtantly and flew to her afflicted friend. They remained ſpeechleſs in each others arms for ſome minutes, before their tears eaſed their over-burthened hearts, and gave their words utterance.

Whilſt they were thus employed, Hillaſton and Chapman were conducted to the room where the wretched Willcox yet lay: his countenance was the picture of deſpair; the fatal piſtol lay by his ſide, and his blood ſtreamed along the floor. His ſhattered brains ſtained the oppoſite wall. They were ſtruck with horror at the ſight, and both their boſoms were differently affected with it.

"So

"So ſhould I have lain," ſaid Hillaſton, to himſelf, "if my fatal purpoſe had been "executed. Thus ſhould I have expired "the object of almighty vengeance, and "in a ſtate of irremediable miſery. Thanks "to God, who has given me an opportu-"nity to repent of my intentions."

"Thus ſhould I have been ſerved, had "I met my deſerts," ſaid the penitent Chapman, aloud. "Thy death, unhap-"py man, ſhall be of ſervice to me. Thy "preſent appearance ſhall never quit my "ſight, nor thy idea my remembrance.

"I will ſupplicate Heaven to forgive "my offences, and pardon thoſe crimes "which have brought thee to this dreadful "end. Let us go, Sir, from this ſcene of "blood. My heart dies within me."

Hillaſton, caſting his eyes about, perceiv-ed a letter laying on the table before him, and on a cloſe inſpection, found it was di-rected for Rigby. He took it in his hand and left the room, attended by Chapman, whoſe countenance was changed to a deadly pale.

pale. He found Kingſley walking backward and forward in the parlour, in a very uneaſy ſtate of mind. Hillaſton deſcribed Willcox's ſituation to his friend, and then delivered him the letter. He broke it open with a trembling hand, and read theſe words aloud.

"Wonder not that I cannot ſee the face "of thoſe whom I have ſo much injured, "or bear thoſe reproaches and that ſhame "I have ſo much deſerved. My own "hand ſhall revenge you, and I die the "victim of my own guilt; but puniſh "not my helpleſs children or my innocent "wife, for my ſake, they have not offend-"ed. The world ſays you are generous: I "will put it to the proof, for I commit "them to your care. Farewel—there is "no bearing the ſtings of conſcious guilt, "and yet live."

"I will," ſaid Kingſley, "take care of "your children and your wife, unhappy "man.

" man. In me, if Heaven prolongs my life,
" they ſhall find father and protector."

Mrs. Kingſley happily prevailed on her couſin to quit that ſcene of woe; and ſhe took her in her coach to farmer Wilkins's. Chapman at his own deſire was left behind, and took care of the funeral, which was as private as poſſible.

The friendſhip and generous aſſurances of Kingſley, helped to dry up Mrs. Wilcox's tears. In a ſhort time, they placed her in her own houſe, and made a genteel proviſion for her and the children.

Mr. Kingſley offered to Chapman his choice of a commiſſion, or a farm, which he had then vacant on his eſtate.

Chapman choſe the latter: for he ſaid, " he could not truſt himſelf in the world " again, and the remainder of his life " would but barely atone for his paſt of- " fences."

His conduct was ſo blameleſs, that Hillaſton had no objection to giving him his ſiſter,

ſiſter, who took a great liking to him. Captain Coates had renewed his addreſſes to Maria Leeſon, and was well received; their marriages were celebrated together, Mr. Leeſon, and Mr. Kingſley both attending at Mr. Hillaſton's, whoſe generoſity Mr. Kingſley returned, by ſettling five thouſand pound on his eldeſt daughter.

Kingſley had now attained the ſummit of earthly happineſs. Poſſeſſed of fortune, independance, and the woman he loved, he had nothing more to wiſh for, than a continuance of that ſtate, which was ſtill more endeared to him by the remembrance of paſt woes; yet his heart was not elated with pride, nor did he forget he was a man.

In continual acts of benevolence and humanity did he and his lovely wife exerciſe themſelves. The tear of diſtreſs was wiped away in their preſence, and poverty never went unrelieved from their gate. Mr. Kingſley never would enter into the buſy world, and ſeveral times refuſed the

the offer of a neighbouring borough: he accepted of the commiſſion of the peace indeed, for the good of the people about him: the happineſs of his tenants and of mankind in general, was his ſtudy and delight.

This amiable couple beheld with joy their virtues reflected, in the ſmiling offſpring which Heaven gave them, to crown their pure and conſtant loves. Reader, imitate their actions—Be good and be happy.

FINIS.

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